A BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

R. E. ROBINSON, M.A.

A BOOK OF
SHORT STORIES

A COLLECTION FOR USE IN COLLEGES, COMPILED AND EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BIOGRAPHIES OF AUTHORS AND QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

BY

R. E. ROBINSON, M. A.

Formerly Principal and Professor of English
Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow

THE P. T. I. BOOK DEPOT
EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHERS
BANGALORE CITY
1945

CONTENTS

THE SHORT STORY

INTRODUCTION

No kind of writing at the present time is so popular as the short story, although it has come into existence in its present form only within the last century. There are certain characteristics of the short story which definitely mark it. It is not merely a story that is short. You will find short sketches and short tales in abundance, but they are not short stories in the technical sense, for they do not depend on plot and climax. The short story varies in length from 2,000 to 10,000 words, although the average is 4,500 words, and the most popular are under 3,500.

Interest. The first requirement of a short story, as of all fiction, is that it must hold the reader's interest. First the author must have something to tell. If his idea passes this test, it is ready to meet the second: Is he able to tell it effectively?

The Central Idea. The chief characteristic of the ideal short story, as distinguished from other kinds of fiction, is that it has a striking idea, situation, or trait of character, and only one. It must produce singleness of effect. One who has read such a story is able to carry away a single, definite impression. This singleness of effect is best secured by selecting a central idea around which to build the tale. Of course, the story, the yarn, is the main thing. But modern taste demands that the story be told in the most vivid, compact way possible to produce a single impression. That which 'pulls a story together' and gives the plot the necessary unity is its central idea or keynote.

The Idea of Struggle. 'What kind of stories do people most like?' an author was asked. He answered by another question, 'What kind of news do people most like to read? News of a fight, of course. The newspaper that contains an account of a battle, a prize-fight, or a struggle between human beings, is the most absorbing thing imaginable to the public.' We are surprised, as we study the stories of great masters, to find in how many of them this idea of struggle is

the central idea. In almost every story of dramatic quality the plot is based on a contest of wills, a clash of interest, an obstacle in a course, some internal or external struggle.

The Plot. By the plot is meant the plan or scheme of a story. One cannot set down the events of ordinary life just as they happen, and call that a story. The first requirement of a short story is, as we have seen, that it should produce a single impression, and to this end it should have as its theme a central idea. The events that go into the story must be only those that will develop this theme and produce the desired impression. Everything else is excluded from the picture.

There are certain qualities that a plot of a short story must have. The first of these is *simplicity*. Since a short story is limited in length, the plot cannot be complex. You should be able to write out the plot or skeleton of any short story in one hundred words. Next it must be *convincing*. If it is impossible or extravagant, the reader is likely to toss it aside. It must be probable, or at least plausible. It must be *original*. While there are no new plots in the world, it is said, writers are continually turning out fresh variations of old plots.

Development of Plot. Keeping in mind the idea of struggle as the basis of plot, we will usually find the following steps in the development of a story. First, an initial impulse or inciting force sets the action going. This is often spoken of as the 'predominant incident.' Second, a number of minor crises or incidents lead to the dramatic climax. Third, the climax of action or the end of the action. The dramatic climax is a noteworthy turning point, which may come before the end of the action, when the reader is made aware that a change of fortune has set in for the chief character. In 'The Necklace,' for instance, the ball is the predominant incident, the loss of the necklace the dramatic climax and the discovery that it was an imitation diamond necklace, the climax of the action. In some stories, however, the point at which the reader sees a turn of fortune for the chief character may come only with the end of the action, and in that case the two climaxes are identical. But

the normal structure of the short story more frequently than not has some steps between the dramatic climax and the end of the action.

Surprise. The modern story writer usually secures surprise by inverting the order of the story and bringing to notice at the end some point which belonged to the earlier part, but which the reader had not suspected or about which he had been deprived of information. In 'The Necklace' the holding back until the end of the information that the necklace was paste is what gives the story its heightened interest and secures for it its rank as a classic.

Leaving Something to the Reader's Imagination. Since the short story must move swiftly, it omits the narration of such incidents or touches as may be hinted at or be otherwise briefly indicated. This adds to the reader's pleasure, for every reader likes such an appeal to his intelligence.

Four Types of Stories. Some stories have the plot, character, and setting combined in almost equal proportions. But in some, the character is the main interest, to which plot and setting are subordinate. In others, the setting is so pronounced as to make what is called an 'atmosphere story,' and in still others (the detective story, for instance,) the plot is the main thing.

Character Drawing. Brander Matthews has described the short story in these words: 'The short story deals with a single character, a single event, a single emotion, or the series of emotions called forth by a single situation.' This is an extreme statement. It would be more true to say that the short story contains a single *chief* character. Every perfect story must have one central character to which all others are subordinate. We think at once of stories in which there is more than one character. In a love story, for instance, there are two lovers. But we shall be sure to find that one of the personalities is much more interesting than the other to the mind of the author, and that he has selected that one as the centre around which to build his story.

The character may be drawn in many ways. Sometimes it is by depicting some external peculiarities which may amount almost to a caricature. But it is depicted

chiefly through speech and action. Omitting the discussion of speech until we come to study the Dialogue in the Short Story, it will be interesting to discover how the author makes his character act. We can imagine that he first of all selects a character possessing a certain individuality. What, precisely, makes this character interesting, is the question he holds before himself until he has discovered its inner significance. For the wonderful thing about the artist is that he can take the commonplace and even the ugly in life, and flood it with beauty and significance. Some writers make the representation of character more important than the plot itself. They wish to see the persons of their imagination in action, for they are sure they must do something very special and interesting. So they next ask themselves the question, what shall I make this character do? And they make him do things that show him completely. They put him in such a situation or bring such forces to bear upon him that his innermost character is revealed.

The chief purpose of a short story is to present character as doing, being, or becoming, under pressure of some crisis. So long as life runs in its natural channels it is not interesting. You cannot know how much power is concealed in it. But let something happen — some crash, some catastrophe — or let an obstacle intervene or some new influence come into a person's life, and we shall see the character reveal itself or turn aside into some new channel.

The Setting. Just as a portrait requires a background, just as a play in a theatre requires scenery, so a story, in order to be natural and life-like, requires a setting. But the setting must always be subordinate to the story, for the story is the chief thing. Someone has compared its setting to the setting of a jewel. It must not overshadow the gem, but be so related to it as to bring out all its beauty.

Before beginning to write a story, the writer has already in mind the central idea around which he is to build it, the plot, and the central character. Then, and not till then, he plans his setting. By setting is meant the surroundings in which the story is laid — the time, place, weather, occupa-

tions, and conditions ; in short, the medium in which the characters move.

The setting gives the mood, the atmosphere of the story. Another word for setting is description. To describe is to picture. And in this picture we must remember the unity of impression which is so essential to the short story. Not a detail of language, customs, costumes, landscape should be given that does not help to make the story more real and vivid. Only that which is significant should be allowed. And the description itself should be given with the greatest accuracy as well as picturesqueness. Use colour words where possible. 'When I describe a landscape, or a house, or a costume,' says Mr. James Lane Allen, 'I try to put it in such words that an artist can paint the scene from my words.' Mr. J. H. Gardner goes further than this, and says: 'The best advice, in the case of description, is to avoid still life as much as you can ··· Where a painter would lay emphasis on the colour and outlines, you can lay it on things that move and flash.'

But more often the setting gives the keynote to the story. It gives the mood and atmosphere. In some stories it does more; it determines the actions of the characters. It influences them not only in what they are, but in what they do.

Finally, we need to remind ourselves that the purpose of description is to make the story more vivid.

The Opening. 'Once upon a time' is the well-remembered opening of our childhood fairy tale, which started at the beginning and told everything in chronological order. This was also the method of short story writers until the appearance of Poe, the innovator. Even in his stories we sometimes find the long-drawn-out introductions, which were the fashion a generation or two ago. But in most of them we find him beginning in the middle or even at the end. This, of course, is always the case in his detective stories. Many writers still observe the chronological order, but they have for ever discarded the long introduction.

The advantage of beginning in the middle is that it plunges the reader at once into the heart of a crisis, a

problem, a mystery. In story-telling, above all arts, the proverb holds good, 'Well begun is half done.' Nothing dull or commonplace in the opening sentences is tolerated by the modern reader. He demands that his interest be caught in the very beginning.

Just as in a play the first scene must present to us the setting, introduce the characters, and take up the thread of the plot, so the opening of the story must set the stage and foreshadow the climax. For, remembering always that singleness of impression and effect is to be secured at all costs, the writer keeps his mind on the climax of the story first, last, and all the time. The other parts of the story will then fall naturally into their subordinate positions, but all will be vitally related to the culminating point.

One of the most frequent ways of opening a story is to give the setting. This at once strikes the keynote and gives the story its atmosphere. Almost as favourite an opening is the description of the character or characters. A third style of opening is the use of dialogue. This is really a form of characterization, for it 'hits off' and reveals directly the personages. Sometimes the setting and dialogue are intertwined. Often the story opens with some general truth which is illustrated in the story.

There is an infinite variety of forms for the opening of the story — portraiture in one, background in another, spiritual and mental environment in a third. But whatever its form, the cardinal virtue of the opening is its brevity. It is 'cut to the bone,' it contains no unnecessary stroke.

The Title. A title should be attractive enough to make us want to know more about the story. It should not, however, be too specific, for then it tells half the tale and sates curiosity in advance. On the other hand, it should not be so vague as to give no hint of what is to come. It should not be too meagre of information, and if it lures by a hint of mystery, it will be irresistible. A good title, therefore, is one that fits the story, piques curiosity or interest, is brief, and is not misleading.

THE GREAT CARBUNCLE *

A MYSTERY OF THE WHITE MOUNTAINS

By Nathaniel Hawthorne

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864) was born at Salem, Mass., U. S A. and died at Plymouth, New Hampshire. He was an imaginative, sensitive boy, very fond of books. An accident crippled him for a time in his youth, and later another illness made him turn to reading, and he stored his mind with the best things in English literature. His favourite books were Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. After completing his university course, he returned to his home and lived for twelve years in seclusion, writing short stories and carefully polishing his style. It was not until he was forty-six that he won fame with his novel, *The Scarlet Letter*. This is considered the greatest work of the imagination yet produced by any American, and one of the great novels of the world. In his short stories Hawthorne ranks among the greatest of modern writers in that form — Poe, Maupassant, and Daudet. Hawthorne had a profound interest in 'the mystery and surprise of character,' and his writings are what is to-day called psychological. Many of them, also, are mysterious and gloomy, and 'lack sunshine,' as he himself said. But the beauty of his style and his power as an artist give him a high place among writers of fiction.

The most popular of his novels is *The Marble Faun*. The best-known of his collections of stories are *The Wonder Book*, *Tanglewood Tales* and *Twice-Told Tales*. Probably his best short stories are 'The Birth-mark,' 'Rappaccini's Daughter,' and 'Drown's Wooden Image' in *Mosses from an Old Manse*; 'The Gray Champion,' 'The Minister's

---

* The Red Indian tradition on which this somewhat extravagant tale is founded, is both too wild and too beautiful to be adequately wrought up in prose. Sullivan, in his *History of Maine*, written since the American Revolution, (1766) remarks, that even then the existence of the Great Carbuncle was not entirely discredited.

Black Veil,' 'The Gentle Boy,' 'The Great Carbuncle,' 'Dr. Heidegger's Experiment,' 'The Ambitious Guest,' 'Wakefield,' and 'The White Old Maid,' from *Twice-Told Tales;* and 'The Great Stone Face,' 'Ethan Brand,' and 'The Snow-Image,' in *The Snow-Image and other Twice-Told Tales.*

At nightfall, once, in the olden time, on the rugged side of one of the Crystal Hills, a party of adventurers were refreshing themselves, after a toilsome and fruitless quest for the Great Carbuncle. They had come thither, not as friends, nor partners in the enterprise, but each, save one youthful pair, by his own selfish and solitary longing for this wondrous gem. Their feeling of brotherhood, however, was strong enough to induce them to contribute a mutual aid in building a rude hut of branches, and kindling a great fire of shattered pines, that had drifted down the headlong current of the Amonoosuck, on the lower bank of which they were to pass the night. There was but one of their number, perhaps, who had become so estranged from natural sympathies, by the absorbing spell of the pursuit, as to acknowledge no satisfaction at the sight of human faces, in the remote and solitary region whither they had ascended. A vast extent of wilderness lay between them and the nearest settlement, while scant a mile above their heads was that black verge, where the hills throw off their shaggy mantle of forest trees, and either robe themselves in clouds, or tower naked into the sky. The roar of the Amonoosuck would have been too awful for endurance, if only a solitary man had listened, while the mountain stream talked with the wind.

The adventurers, therefore, exchanged hospitable greetings, and welcomed one another to the hut, where each man was the host, and all were the guests of the whole company. They spread their individual supplies of food on the flat surface of a rock, and partook of a general repast; at the close of which, a sentiment of good fellowship was perceptible among the party, though repressed by the idea that the renewed search for the Great Carbuncle must make them strangers again in the morning. Seven men and one young woman, they warmed themselves together at the fire, which extended its bright wall along the whole front of their wigwam. As they observed the various and contrasted figures that made up the assemblage, each man looking like a caricature of himself, in the unsteady light that flickered over him, they came mutually to the conclusion, that an odder society had never met, in city or wilderness, on mountain or plain.

The eldest of the group, a tall, lean, weather-beaten man, some sixty years of age, was clad in the skins of wild animals, whose fashion of dress he did well to imitate, since the deer, the wolf, and the bear had long been his most intimate companions. He was one of those ill-fated mortals, such as the Indians told of, whom, in their early youth, the Great Carbuncle smote with a peculiar madness, and became the passionate dream of their existence. All, who visited that region, knew him as the Seeker, and by no other name. As none could remember when he first took up the search, there went a fable in the valley of the Saco, that for his inordinate lust after the Great Carbuncle, he had been condemned to wander among the mountains till the end of time, still with the same feverish hopes at sunrise, the same despair at eve. Near this

miserable Seeker sat a little elderly personage, wearing a high-crowned hat, shaped somewhat like a crucible. He was from beyond the sea, a Doctor Cacaphodel, who had wilted and dried himself into a mummy by continually stooping over charcoal furnaces, and inhaling unwholesome fumes, during his researches in chemistry and alchemy. It was told of him, whether truly or not, that, at the commencement of his studies, he had drained his body of all its richest blood, and wasted it, with other inestimable ingredients, in an unsuccessful experiment — and had never been a well man since. Another of the adventurers was Master Ichabod Pigsnort, a weighty merchant and selectman of Boston, and an elder of the famous Mr. Norton's church. His enemies had a ridiculous story, that Master Pigsnort was accustomed to spend a whole hour after prayer-time, every morning and evening in wallowing naked among an immense quantity of pine-tree shillings, which were the earliest silver coinage of Massachusetts. The fourth, whom we shall notice, had no name that his companions knew of, and was chiefly distinguished by a sneer that always contorted his thin visage, and by a prodigious pair of spectacles, which were supposed to deform and discolour the whole face of nature to this gentleman's perception. The fifth adventurer likewise lacked a name, which was the greater pity, as he appeared to be a poet. He was a bright-eyed man, but woefully pined away, which was no more than natural, if, as some people affirmed, his ordinary diet was fog, morning mist, and a slice of the densest cloud within his reach, sauced with moonshine, whenever he could get it. Certain it is, that the poetry which flowed from him had a smack of all these dainties. The sixth of the party was a young

man of haughty mien, who sat somewhat apart from the rest, wearing his plumed hat loftily among his elders, while the fire glittered on the rich embroidery of his dress, and gleamed intensely on the jewelled pommel of his sword. This was the Lord de Vere, who, when at home, was said to spend much of his time in the burial-vault of his dead progenitors, rummaging their mouldy coffins in search of all the earthly pride and vainglory that was hidden among bones and dust ; so that, besides his own share, he had the collected haughtiness of his whole line of ancestry.

Lastly, there was a handsome youth in rustic garb, and by his side a blooming little person, in whom a delicate shade of maiden reserve was just melting into the rich glow of a young wife's affection. Her name was Hannah, and her husband's Matthew ; two homely names, yet well enough adapted to the simple pair, who seemed strangely out of place among the whimsical fraternity whose wits had been set agog by the Great Carbuncle.

Beneath the shelter of one hut, in the bright blaze of the same fire, sat this varied group of adventurers, all so intent upon a single object, that, of whatever else they began to speak, their closing words were sure to be illuminated with the Great Carbuncle. Several related the circumstances that brought them thither. One had listened to a traveller's tale of this marvellous stone, in his own distant country, and had immediately been seized with such a thirst for beholding it, as could only be quenched in its intensest lustre. Another, so long ago as when the famous Captain Smith visited these coasts, had seen it blazing far at sea, and had felt no rest in all the intervening years, till now that he took up the search. A third, being encamped on a

hunting expedition, full forty miles south of the White Mountains, awoke at midnight, and beheld the Great Carbuncle gleaming like a meteor, so that the shadows of the trees fell backward from it. They spoke of the innumerable attempts which had been made to reach the spot, and of the singular fatality which had hitherto withheld success from all adventurers, though it might seem so easy to follow to its source a light that overpowered the moon, and almost matched the sun. It was observable that each smiled scornfully at the madness of every other, in anticipating better fortune than the past, yet nourished a scarcely hidden conviction, that he would himself be the favoured one. As if to allay their too sanguine hopes, they recurred to the Indian traditions that a spirit kept watch about the gem, and bewildered those who sought it, either by removing it from peak to peak of the higher hills, or by calling up a mist from the enchanted lake over which it hung. But these tales were deemed unworthy of credit; all professing to believe that the search had been baffled by want of sagacity or perseverance in the adventurers, or such other causes as might naturally obstruct the passage to any given point, among the intricacies of forest, valley, and mountain.

In a pause of the conversation, the wearer of the prodigious spectacles looked round upon the party, making each individual, in turn, the object of the sneer which invariably dwelt upon his countenance.

'So, fellow-pilgrims,' said he, 'here we are, seven wise men and one fair damsel — who, doubtless, is as wise as any graybeard of the company: here we are, I say, all bound on the same goodly enterprise. Methinks, now, it were not amiss, that

each of us declare what he proposes to do with the great Carbuncle, provided he have the good hap to clutch it. What says our friend in the bear-skin? How mean you, good sir, to enjoy the prize which you have been seeking, the Lord knows how long, among the Crystal Hills?'

'How enjoy it!' exclaimed the aged Seeker, bitterly. 'I hope for no enjoyment from it; that folly has passed long ago! I keep up the search for this accursed stone, because the vain ambition of my youth has become a fate upon me, in old age. The pursuit alone is my strength, — the energy of my soul — the warmth of my blood, and the pith and marrow of my bones! Were I to turn my back upon it, I should fall down dead, on the hither side of the Notch, which is the gateway of this mountain region. Yet, not to have my wasted lifetime back again, would I give up my hopes of the Great Carbuncle! Having found it, I shall bear it to a certain cavern that I wot of and there, grasping it in my arms, lie down and die, and keep it buried with me for ever.'

'O wretch, regardless of the interests of science!' cried Doctor Cacaphodel, with philosophic indignation. 'Thou art not worthy to behold, even from afar off, the lustre of this most precious gem that ever was concocted in the laboratory of Nature. Mine is the sole purpose for which a wise man may desire the possession of the Great Carbuncle. Immediately on obtaining it — for I have a presentiment, good people, that the prize is reserved to crown my scientific reputation — I shall return to Europe, and employ my remaining years in reducing it to its first elements. A portion of the stone will I grind to impalpable powder; other parts shall be dissolved in acids, or whatever

solvents will act upon so admirable a composition; and the remainder I design to melt in the crucible, or set on fire with the blowpipe. By these various methods I shall gain an accurate analysis, and finally bestow the result of my labours upon the world, in a folio volume.'

'Excellent!' quoth the man with the spectacles. 'Nor need you hesitate, learned sir, on account of the necessary destruction of the gem; since the perusal of your folio may teach every mother's son of us to concoct a Great Carbuncle of his own.'

'But, verily,' said Master Ichabod Pigsnort, 'for mine own part I object to the making of these counterfeits, as being calculated to reduce the marketable value of the true gem. I tell ye frankly, sirs, I have an interest in keeping up the price. Here have I quitted my regular traffic, leaving my warehouse in the care of my clerks, and putting my credit to great hazard, and, furthermore, have put myself in peril of death or captivity by the accursed heathen savages — and all this without daring to ask the prayers of the congregation, because the quest for the Great Carbuncle is deemed little better than a traffic with the Evil One. Now think ye that I would have done this grievous wrong to my soul, body, reputation, and estate, without a reasonable chance of profit?'

'Not I, pious Master Pigsnort,' said the man with the spectacles. 'I never laid such a great folly to thy charge.'

'Truly, I hope not,' said the merchant. 'Now, as touching this Great Carbuncle, I am free to own that I have never had a glimpse of it; but be it only the hundredth part so bright as people tell, it will surely outvalue the Great Mogul's best diamond, which he holds at an incalculable sum.

Wherefore I am minded to put the Great Carbuncle on shipboard, and voyage with it to England, France, Spain, Italy, or into Heathendom, if Providence should send me thither, and, in a word, dispose of the gem to the best bidder among the potentates of the earth, that he may place it among his crown jewels. If any of ye have a wiser plan, let him expound it.'

'That have I, thou sordid man!' exclaimed the poet. 'Dost thou desire nothing brighter than gold, that thou wouldst transmute all this ethereal lustre into such dross, as thou wallowest in already? For myself, hiding the jewel under my cloak, I shall hie me back to my attic chamber, in one of the darksome alleys of London. There, night and day will I gaze upon it — my soul shall drink its radiance — it shall be diffused throughout my intellectual powers, and gleam brightly in every line of poesy that I indite. Thus, long ages after I am gone, the splendour of the Great Carbuncle will blaze around my name!'

'Well said, Master Poet!' cried he of the spectacles. 'Hide it under thy cloak, sayest thou? Why, it will gleam through the holes, and make thee look like a jack-o'-lantern!'

'To think!' ejaculated the Lord de Vere, rather to himself than his companions, the best of whom he held utterly unworthy of his intercourse — 'to think that a fellow in a tattered cloak should talk of conveying the Great Carbuncle to a garret in Grub Street: have not I resolved within myself, that the whole earth contains no fitter ornament for the great hall of my ancestral castle? There shall it flame for ages, making a noonday of midnight, glittering on the suits of armour, the banners and escutcheons, that hang around the wall, and

keeping bright the memory of heroes. Wherefore have all other adventurers sought the prize in vain, but that I might win it, and make it a symbol of the glories of our lofty line? And never, on the diadem of the White Mountains, did the Great Carbuncle hold a place half so honoured as is reserved for it in the hall of the De Veres!'

'It is a noble thought,' said the Cynic, with an obsequious sneer. 'Yet, might I presume to say so, the gem would make a rare sepulchral lamp, and would display the glories of your lordship's progenitors more truly in the ancestral vault than in the castle hall.'

'Nay, forsooth,' observed Matthew, the young rustic, who sat hand in hand with his bride, 'the gentleman has bethought himself of a profitable use for this bright stone. Hannah here and I are seeking it for a like purpose.'

'How, fellow!' exclaimed his lordship, in surprise. 'What castle hall hast thou to hang it in?'

'No castle,' replied Matthew, 'but as neat a cottage as any within sight of the Crystal Hills. Ye must know, friends, that Hannah and I, being wedded the last week, have taken up the search of the Great Carbuncle, because we shall need its light in the long winter evenings; and it will be such a pretty thing to show the neighbours when they visit us. It will shine through the house, so that we may pick up a pin in any corner, and will set all the windows a-glowing as if there were a great fire of pine knots in the chimney. And then how pleasant, when we awake in the night, to be able to see one another's faces!'

There was a general smile among the adventurers at the simplicity of the young couple's project,

in regard to this wondrous and invaluable stone, with which the greatest monarch on earth might have been proud to adorn his palace. Especially the man with spectacles, who had sneered at all the company in turn, now twisted his visage into such an expression of ill-natured mirth, that Matthew asked him, rather peevishly, what he himself meant to do with the Great Carbuncle.

'The Great Carbuncle!' answered the Cynic, with ineffable scorn. 'Why, you blockhead, there is no such thing, in *rerum natura*. I have come three thousand miles, and am resolved to set my foot on every peak of these mountains, and poke my head into every chasm, for the sole purpose of demonstrating to the satisfaction of any man one whit less an ass than thyself that the Great Carbuncle is all a humbug!'

Vain and foolish were the motives that had brought most of the adventurers to the Crystal Hills, but none so vain, so foolish, and so impious too, as that of the scoffer with the prodigious spectacles. He was one of those wretched and evil men, whose yearnings are downward to the darkness, instead of heavenward, and who, could they but extinguish the lights which God hath kindled for us, would count the midnight gloom their chiefest glory. As the Cynic spoke, several of the party were startled by a gleam of red splendour, that showed the huge shapes of the surrounding mountains, and the rock-bestrewn bed of the turbulent river with an illumination unlike that of their fire, on the trunks and black boughs of the forest trees. They listened for the roll of thunder, but heard nothing, and were glad that the tempest came not near them. The stars, those dial points of heaven, now warned the adventurers to close their eyes on the blazing logs,

and open them, in dreams, to the glow of the Great Carbuncle.

The young married couple had taken their lodgings in the farthest corner of the wigwam, and were separated from the rest of the party by a curtain of curiously woven twigs, such as might have hung, in deep festoons, around the bridal bower of Eve. The modest little wife had wrought this piece of tapestry while the other guests were talking. She and her husband fell asleep with hands tenderly clasped, and awoke, from visions of unearthly radiance to meet the more blessed light of one another's eyes. They awoke at the same instant, and with one happy smile beaming over their two faces, which grew brighter with their consciousness of the reality of life and love. But no sooner did she recollect where they were, than the bride peeped through the interstices of the leafy curtain, and saw that the outer room of the hut was deserted.

'Up, dear Matthew!' cried she in haste. 'The strange folk are all gone! Up, this very minute, or we shall lose the Great Carbuncle!'

In truth, so little did these poor young people deserve the mighty prize which had lured them thither, that they had slept peacefully all night, and till the summits of the hills were glittering with sunshine; while the other adventurers had tossed their limbs in feverish wakefulness, or dreamed of climbing precipices, and set off to realize their dreams with the earliest peep of dawn. But Matthew and Hannah, after their calm rest, were as light as two young deer, and merely stopped to say their prayers, and wash themselves in a cold pool of the Amonoosuck, and then to taste a morsel of food, ere they turned their faces to the mountain side.

It was a sweet emblem of conjugal affection, as they toiled up the difficult ascent, gathering strength from the mutual aid which they afforded. After several little accidents, such as a torn robe, a lost shoe, and the entanglement of Hannah's hair in a bough, they reached the upper verge of the forest, and were now to pursue a more adventurous course. The innumerable trunks and heavy foliage of the trees had hitherto shut in their thoughts, which now shrank affrighted from the region of wind, and cloud, and naked rocks, and desolate sunshine, that rose immeasurably above them. They gazed back at the obscure wilderness which they had traversed, and longed to be buried again in its depths, rather than trust themselves to so vast and visible a solitude.

'Shall we go on?' said Matthew, throwing his arm round Hannah's waist, both to protect her, and to comfort his heart by drawing her close to it.

But the little bride, simple as she was, had a woman's love of jewels, and could not forego the hope of possessing the very brightest in the world, in spite of the perils with which it must be won.

'Let us climb a little higher,' whispered she, yet tremulously, as she turned her face upward to the lonely sky.

'Come, then,' said Matthew, mustering his manly courage, and drawing her along with him; for she became timid again, the moment that he grew bold.

And upward, accordingly, went the pilgrims of the Great Carbuncle, now treading upon the tops and thickly interwoven branches of dwarf pines, which, by the growth of centuries, though mossy with age, had barely reached three feet in altitude. Next they came to masses and fragments of naked

rock, heaped confusedly together, like a cairn reared by giants, in memory of a giant chief. In this bleak realm of upper air, nothing breathed, nothing grew; there was no life but what was concentrated in their two hearts; they had climbed so high, that Nature herself seemed no longer to keep them company. She lingered beneath them, within the verge of the forest trees, and sent a farewell glance after her children, as they strayed where her own green footprints had never been. But soon they were to be hidden from her eye. Densely and dark the mists began to gather below, casting black spots of shadow on the vast landscape, and sailing heavily to one centre, as if the loftiest mountain peak had summoned a council of its kindred clouds. Finally, the vapours welded themselves, as it were, into a mass, presenting the appearance of a pavement over which the wanderers might have trodden, but where they would vainly have sought an avenue to the blessed earth which they had lost. And the lovers yearned to behold that green earth again, more intensely, alas! than, beneath a clouded sky, they had ever desired a glimpse of heaven. They even felt it a relief to their desolation, when the mists, creeping gradually up the mountain, concealed its lonely peak, and thus annihilated, at least for them, the whole region of visible space. But they drew closer together, with a fond and melancholy gaze, dreading lest the universal cloud should snatch them from each other's sight.

Still, perhaps, they would have been resolute to climb as far and as high, between earth and heaven, as they could find foothold, if Hannah's strength had not begun to fail, and with that, her courage also. Her breath grew short. She refused to burden her husband with her weight, but often

tottered against his side, and recovered herself each time by a feebler effort. At last, she sank down on one of the rocky steps of the acclivity.

'We are lost, dear Matthew,' said she, mournfully. 'We shall never find our way to the earth again. And oh, how happy we might have been in our cottage!'

'Dear heart!—we will yet be happy there,' answered Matthew. 'Look! In this direction, the sunshine penetrates the dismal mist. By its aid I can direct our course to the passage of the Notch. Let us go back, love, and dream no more of the Great Carbuncle!'

'The sun cannot be yonder,' said Hannah, with despondence. 'By this time, it must be noon. If there could ever be any sunshine here, it would come from above our heads.'

'But look!' repeated Matthew, in a somewhat altered tone. 'It is brightening every moment. If not sunshine, what can it be?'

Nor could the young bride any longer deny, that a radiance was breaking through the mist, and changing its dim hue to a dusky red, which continually grew more vivid, as if brilliant particles were interfused with the gloom. Now, also, the cloud began to roll away from the mountain, while, as it heavily withdrew, one object after another started out of its impenetrable obscurity into sight, with precisely the effect of a new creation, before the indistinctness of the old chaos had been completely swallowed up. As the process went on, they saw the gleaming of water close at their feet, and found themselves on the very border of a mountain lake, deep, bright, clear, and calmly beautiful, spreading from brim to brim of a basin that had been scooped out of the solid rock. A

ray of glory flashed across its surface. The pilgrims looked whence it should proceed, but closed their eyes with a thrill of awful admiration, to exclude the fervid splendour that glowed from the brow of a cliff, impending over the enchanted lake. For the simple pair had reached that lake of mystery, and found the long-sought shrine of the Great Carbuncle!

They threw their arms around each other, and trembled at their own success; for as the legends of this wondrous gem rushed thick upon their memory, they felt themselves marked out by fate — and the consciousness was fearful. Often, from childhood upward they had seen it shining like a distant star. And now that star was throwing its intensest lustre on their hearts. They seemed changed to one another's eyes, in the red brilliancy that flamed upon their cheeks, while it lent the same fire to the lake, the rocks, and sky, and to the mists which had rolled back before its power. But, with their next glance, they beheld an object that drew their attention even from the mighty stone. At the base of the cliff, directly beneath the Great Carbuncle, appeared the figure of a man, with his arms extended in the act of climbing, and his face turned upward, as if to drink the full gush of splendour. But he stirred not, no more than if changed to marble.

'It is the Seeker,' whispered Hannah, convulsively grasping her husband's arm. 'Matthew, he is dead.'

'The joy of success has killed him,' replied Matthew, trembling violently. 'Or perhaps, the very light of the Great Carbuncle was death!'

'The Great Carbuncle!' cried a peevish voice behind them. 'The Great Humbug! If you have found it prithee point it out to me.'

They turned their heads, and there was the Cynic, with his prodigious spectacles set carefully on his nose, staring now at the lake, now at the rocks, now at the distant masses of vapour, now right at the Great Carbuncle itself, yet seemingly as unconscious of its light, as if all the scattered clouds were condensed about his person. Though its radiance actually threw the shadow of the unbeliever at his own feet, as he turned his back upon the glorious jewel, he would not be convinced that there was the least glimmer there.

'Where is your Great Humbug?' he repeated. 'I challenge you to make me see it!'

'There,' said Matthew, incensed at such perverse blindness, and turning the Cynic round towards the illuminated cliff. 'Take off those abominable spectacles, and you cannot help seeing it!'

Now these coloured spectacles probably darkened the Cynic's sight, in at least as great a degree as the smoked glasses through which people gaze at an eclipse. With resolute bravado, however, he snatched them from his nose, and fixed a bold stare full upon the ruddy blaze of the Great Carbuncle. But scarcely had he encountered it, when, with a deep, shuddering groan, he dropped his head, and pressed both hands across his miserable eyes. Thenceforth there was, in very truth, no light of the Great Carbuncle, nor any other light on earth, nor light of Heaven itself, for the poor Cynic. So long accustomed to view all objects through a medium that deprived them of every glimpse of brightness, a single flash of so glorious a phenomenon, striking upon his naked vision, had blinded him for ever.

'Matthew,' said Hannah, clinging to him, 'let us go hence!'

Matthew saw that she was faint, and kneeling down, supported her in his arms, while he threw some of the thrillingly cold water of the enchanted lake upon her face and bosom. It revived her, but could not renovate her courage.

'Yes, dearest!' cried Matthew, pressing her tremulous form to his breast, 'we will go hence, and return to our humble cottage. The blessed sunshine and the quiet moonlight shall come through our window. We will kindle the cheerful glow of our hearth at eventide, and be happy in its light. But never again will we desire more light than all the world may share with us.'

'No,' said his bride, 'for how could we live by day, or sleep by night in this awful blaze of the Great Carbuncle!'

Out of the hollow of their hands, they drank each a draught from the lake, which presented them its waters uncontaminated by an earthly lip. Then, lending their guidance to the blinded Cynic, who uttered not a word, and even stifled his groans in his own most wretched heart, they began to descend the mountain. Yet, as they left the shore, till then untrodden, of the spirit's lake, they threw a farewell glance towards the cliff, and beheld the vapours gathering in dense volumes, through which the gem burned duskily.

As touching the other pilgrims of the Great Carbuncle, the legend goes on to tell, that the worshipful Master Ichabod Pigsnort soon gave up the quest, as a desperate speculation, and wisely resolved to betake himself again to his warehouse, near the town dock, in Boston. But, as he passed through the Notch of the mountains, a war party of Indians captured our unlucky merchant, and carried him to Montreal, there holding him in bondage,

till, by the payment of a heavy ransom, he had woefully subtracted from his hoard of pine-tree shillings. By his long absence, moreover, his affairs had become so disordered that, for the rest of his life, instead of wallowing in silver he had seldom a sixpence worth of copper. Dr. Cacaphodel, the alchemist, returned to his laboratory with a prodigious fragment of granite, which he ground to powder, dissolved in acids, melted in the crucible, and burned with the blow-pipe, and published the result of his experiments in one of the heaviest folios of the day. And, for all these purposes, the gem itself could not have answered better than the granite. The poet, by a somewhat similar mistake, made prize of a great piece of ice, which he found in a sunless chasm of the mountains, and swore that it corresponded, in all points, with his idea of the Great Carbuncle. The critics say that, if his poetry lacked the splendour of the gem, it retained all the coldness of the ice. The Lord de Vere went back to his ancestral hall, where he contented himself with a wax lighted chandelier, and filled, in due course of time, another coffin in the ancestral vault. As the funeral torches gleamed within that dark receptacle, there was no need of the Great Carbuncle to show the vanity of earthly pomp.

The Cynic, having cast aside his spectacles, wandered about the world, a miserable object, and was punished with an agonising desire of light, for the wilful blindness of his former life. The whole night long he would lift his splendour-blasted orbs to the moon and stars; he turned his face eastward, at sunrise, as duly as a Persian idolater; he made a pilgrimage to Rome, to witness the magnificent illumination of St. Peter's Church; and finally perished in the great fire of London, into the

midst of which he had thrust himself, with the desperate idea of catching one feeble ray from the blaze that was kindling earth and heaven.

Matthew and his bride spent many peaceful years, and were fond of telling the legend of the Great Carbuncle. The Tale, however, towards the close of their lengthened lives, did not meet with the full credence that had been accorded to it by those who remembered the ancient lustre of the gem. For it is affirmed that, from the hour when two mortals had shown themselves so simply wise as to reject a jewel which would have dimmed all earthly things, its splendour waned. When other pilgrims reached the cliff, they found only an opaque stone, with particles of mica glittering on its surface. There is also a tradition that, as the youthful pair departed, the gem was loosened from the forehead of the cliff, and fell into the enchanted lake, and that, at noontide, the Seeker's form may still be seen to bend over its quenchless gleam.

Some few believe that this inestimable stone is blazing as of old, and say that they have caught its radiance, like a flash of summer lightning, far down the valley of the Saco. And be it owned, that, many a mile from the Crystal Hills, I saw a wondrous light around their summits, and was lured, by the faith of poesy, to be the latest pilgrim of the GREAT CARBUNCLE.

THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO

BY EDGAR ALLAN POE

Edgar Allan Poe, (1809–1849) is now recognized as perhaps the greatest literary genius America has produced. His parents were of the theatrical profession, his mother being a famous actress of the day. Mrs. Poe died when the boy was not quite three years of age, and he entered the home of Mr. Allan, a wealthy tobacco merchant in Richmond, Virginia.

In 1815, Mr. Allan moved to England. There Poe entered a school near London, where he applied himself diligently to the study of the classics and to literature. When the family returned, after five years, to Richmond, Poe continued his studies, showing marked indications of poetic genius.

At the age of seventeen, Poe matriculated at the University of Virginia. There he seems to have entered upon a round of recklessness, a recklessness which to a great extent characterized much of his after life. Before the year had ended he found himself twenty-five hundred dollars in debt from gambling. These debts his adopted father refused to pay, and removed the boy from the University, designing for him a place in the counting-room. But the next year Poe ran away and joined the United States Army, giving his age as twenty-two and his name as Edgar Perry.

After the death of Mrs. Allan, her husband secured Poe's discharge from the army, and his appointment to West Point as a cadet, July 1, 1830; but after six months Poe contrived to be dismissed. He had already published his poems successfully, so he went to New York, in the early part of 1831, to begin his professional literary life. For six years — 1833 to 1839 — he wrote brilliantly for *The Southern Literary Messenger* in Baltimore. Then

he went successively to New York and Philadelphia, where he worked on various literary enterprises for six years. In 1844 he returned to New York, and became assistant to N. P. Willis, in whose journal, *The Mirror,* 'The Raven' appeared in 1845. Poe's literary reputation was now established both in America and abroad, most of his masterpieces having been created during the turbulent years of his wanderings. In 1835 he had been married to Virginia Clemm, his cousin, and her early death in 1847 broke his spirit. His health had already succumbed to his morbid temperament — which magnified every sorrow of his chaotic career — and to the excesses of drugs and drink. He died most unhappily, October 7, 1849, at the age of forty — a master spirit pitifully wrecked before his prime.

Poe ranks first, historically, as a short story writer, in that he was the first to recognize fully the nature of this type of fiction, to define its limits, to suggest its possibilities and to exemplify brilliantly his theories. He definitely struck away from the old order and blazed a new trail, preparing the way for succeeding writers. He is the father of the short story. He showed by unerring illustration, in his tales of the gruesome, how to secure singleness of effect, and therefore how to create a strongly unified impression upon the mind of the reader. In addition, he is the inventor of the detective story: his 'Dupin' is the literary ancestor of Sherlock Holmes.

Besides being a short story writer, Poe was a remarkable poet, essayist and critic. 'The Raven,' 'Lenore,' 'Ulalume,' 'The Bells,' 'Annable Lee,' 'Israfel,' and 'To One in Paradise' are among his best poems. Probably the greatest of his stories are: 'MS. Found in a Bottle.' 'The Assignation,' 'Ligeia,' 'The Murders in The Rue Morgue.' 'The Mystery of Marie Roget,' 'A Descent into The Maelstrom,' 'The Masque of The Red Death,' 'The Pit and The Pendulum,' 'The Gold Bug,' 'The Black Cat,' 'The Cask of Amontillado,' 'The Purloined Letter.'

The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as best I could; but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat. *At length* I would be avenged; this was a point definitely settled — but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish, but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.

It must be understood that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good-will. I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile *now* was at the thought of his immolation.

He had a weak point — this Fortunato — although in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine. Few Italians have the true virtuoso spirit. For the most part their enthusiasm is adapted to suit the time and opportunity — to practise imposture upon the British and Austrian millionaires. In painting and gemmary, Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a quack — but in the matter of old wines he was sincere. In this respect I did not differ from him materially: I was skilful in the Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival season, that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore motley. He had on a tight-fitting

parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells. I was so pleased to see him that I thought I should never have done wringing his hand.

I said to him: 'My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking to-day! But I have received a pipe of what passes for Amontillado, and I have my doubts.'

'How?' said he. 'Amontillado? A pipe? Impossible! And in the middle of the carnival!'

'I have my doubts,' I replied; 'and I was silly enough to pay the full Amontillado price without consulting you in the matter. You were not to be found, and I was fearful of losing a bargain.'

'Amontillado!'

'I have my doubts.'

'Amontillado!'

'And I must satisfy them.'

'Amontillado!'

'As you are engaged, I am on my way to Luchesi. If anyone has a critical turn, it is he. He will tell me --'

'Luchesi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry.'

'And yet some fools will have it that his taste is a match for your own.'

'Come, let us go.'

'Whither?'

'To your vaults.'

'My friend, no; I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have an engagement. Luchesi —'

'I have no engagement; — come.'

'My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are

afflicted. The vaults are insufferably damp. They are encrusted with nitre.'

'Let us go, nevertheless. The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado! You have been imposed upon. And as for Luchesi, he cannot distinguish Sherry from Amontillado.'

Thus speaking, Fortunato possessed himself of my arm. Putting on a mask of black silk, and drawing a roquelaure closely about my person, I suffered him to hurry me to my palazzo.

There were no attendants at home; they had absconded to make merry in honour of the time. I had told them that I should not return until the morning, and had given them explicit orders not to stir from the house. These orders were sufficient, I well knew, to insure their immediate disappearance, one and all, as soon as my back was turned.

I took from their sconces two flambeaus, and giving one to Fortunato, bowed him through several suites of rooms to the archway that led into the vaults. I passed down a long and winding staircase, requesting him to be cautious as he followed. We came at length to the foot of the descent, and stood together on the damp ground of the catacombs of the Montresors.

The gait of my friend was unsteady, and the bells upon his cap jingled as he strode.

'The pipe,' said he.

'It is farther on,' said I; 'but observe the white web-work which gleams from these cavern walls.'

He turned towards me, and looked into my eyes with two filmy orbs that distilled the rheum of intoxication.

'Nitre?' he asked, at length.

'Nitre,' I replied. 'How long have you had that cough?'

'Ugh! ugh! ugh! — ugh! ugh! ugh! — ugh! ugh! ugh! — ugh! ugh! ugh! — ugh! ugh! ugh!'

My poor friend found it impossible to reply for many minutes.

'It is nothing,' he said, at last.

'Come,' I said, with decision, 'we will go back; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter. We will go back; you will be ill, and I cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchesi —'

'Enough,' he said; 'the cough is a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough.'

'True — true,' I replied; 'and, indeed, I had no intention of alarming you unnecessarily — but you should use all proper caution. A draught of this Medoc will defend us from the damps.'

Here I knocked the neck off a bottle which I drew from a long row of its fellows that lay upon the mould.

'Drink,' I said, presenting him the wine.

He raised it to his lips with a leer. He paused and nodded to me familiarly, while his bells jingled.

'I drink,' he said, 'to the buried that repose around us.'

'And I to your long life.'

He again took my arm, and we proceeded.

'These vaults,' he said, 'are extensive.'

'The Montresors,' I replied, 'were a great and numerous family.'

'I forget your arms.'

'A huge human foot d'or, in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are imbedded in the heel.'

'And the motto?'

'*Nemo me impune lacessit.*'

'Good!' he said.

The wine sparkled in his eyes and the bells jingled. My own fancy grew warm with the Medoc. We had passed through walls of piled bones, with casks and puncheons intermingling, into the inmost recesses of the catacombs. I paused again and this time I made bold to seize Fortunato by an arm above the elbow.

'The nitre!' I said; 'see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river's bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come, we will go back ere it is too late. Your cough — '

'It is nothing,' he said; 'let us go on. But first, another draught of the Medoc.'

I broke and reached him a flagon of De Grave. He emptied it at a breath. His eyes flashed with a fierce light. He laughed and threw the bottle upwards with a gesticulation I did not understand.

I looked at him in surprise. He repeated the movement — a grotesque one.

'You do not comprehend?' he said.

'Not I,' I replied.

'Then you are not of the brotherhood.'

'How?'

'You are not of the masons.'

'Yes, yes,' I said, 'yes, yes.'

'You? Impossible! A mason?'

'A mason,' I replied.

'A sign,' he said.

'It is this,' I answered, producing a trowel from bèneath the folds of my roquelaure.

'You jest,' he exclaimed, recoiling a few paces. 'But let us proceed to the Amontillado.'

'Be it so,' I said, replacing the tool beneath the cloak, and again offering him my arm. He leaned upon it heavily. We continued our route in search of the Amontillado. We passed through a range of low arches, descended, passed on, and, descending again, arrived at a deep crypt, in which the foulness of the air caused our flambeaus rather to glow than flame.

At the most remote end of the crypt there appeared another less spacious. Its walls had been lined with human remains, piled to the vault overhead, in the fashion of the great catacombs of Paris. Three sides of this interior crypt were still ornamented in this manner. From the fourth the bones had been thrown down, and lay promiscuously upon the earth, forming at one point a mound of some size. Within the wall thus exposed by the displacing of the bones, we perceived a still interior recess, in depth about four feet, in width three, in height six or seven. It seemed to have been constructed for no especial use within itself, but formed merely the interval between two of the colossal supports of the roof of the catacombs, and was backed by one of their circumscribing walls of solid granite.

It was in vain that Fortunato, uplifting his dull torch, endeavoured to pry into the depth of the recess. Its termination the feeble light did not enable us to see.

'Proceed,' I said; 'herein is the Amontillado. As for Luchesi — '

'He is an ignoramus,' interrupted my friend, as he stepped unsteadily forward, while I followed

immediately at his heels. In an instant he had reached the extremity of the niche, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood stupidly bewildered. A moment more and I had fettered him to the granite. In its surface were two iron staples, distant from each other about two feet, horizontally. From one of these depended a short chain, from the other a padlock. Throwing the links about his waist, it was but the work of a few seconds to secure it. He was too much astounded to resist. Withdrawing the key, I stepped back from the recess.

'Pass your hand,' I said, 'over the wall; you cannot help feeling the nitre. Indeed it is *very* damp. Once more let me *implore* you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you. But I must first render you all the little attentions in my power.'

'The Amontillado!' ejaculated my friend, not yet recovered from his astonishment.

'True,' I replied; 'the Amontillado.'

As I said these words I busied myself among the pile of bones of which I have before spoken. Throwing them aside, I soon uncovered a quantity of building stone and mortar. With these materials and with the aid of my trowel, I began vigorously to wall up the entrance of the niche.

I had scarcely laid the first tier of the masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was *not* the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the furious vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes,

during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labours and sat down upon the bones. When at last the clanking subsided I resumed the trowel and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaus over the mason-work, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within.

A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated — I trembled. Unsheathing my rapier I began to grope with it about the recess; but the thought of an instant reassured me. I placed my hand upon the solid fabric of the catacombs and felt satisfied. I reapproached the wall. I replied to the yells of him who clamoured. I re-echoed — I aided — I surpassed them in volume and in strength. I did this, and the clamourer grew still.

It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close. I had completed the eighth, the ninth, and the tenth tier. I had finished a portion of the last and the eleventh; there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out the niche a low laugh that erected the hairs upon my head. It was succeeded by a sad voice which I had difficulty in recognizing as that of the noble Fortunato. The voice said:

'Ha! ha! ha! — he! he! he! — a very good joke indeed — an excellent jest. We will have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo — he! he! he! — over our wine — he! he! he!'

'The Amontillado!' I said.

'He! he! he!—he! he! he!—yes, the Amontillado. But is it not getting late? Will not they be awaiting us at the palazzo,—the Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let us be gone.'

'Yes,' I said, 'let us be gone.'

'For the love of God, Montresor!'

'Yes,' I said, 'for the love of God!'

But to these words I hearkened in vain for a reply. I grew impatient. I called aloud:

'Fortunato!'

No answer. I called again:

'Fortunato!'

No answer still. I thrust a torch through the remaining aperture and let it fall within. There came forth in return only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick—on account of the dampness of the catacombs. I hastened to make an end of my labour. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I re-erected the old rampart of bones. For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. *In pace requiescat.*

TENNESSEE'S PARTNER

By Francis Bret Harte

Francis Bret Harte (1839–1902) was born in Albany, New York. Abandoning his common-school education at the age of fifteen, he followed the lure of the gold craze to California, but neither teaching nor mining enriched him, so in 1857 he became a compositor on the *Golden Era*, San Francisco. He then edited the *Californian*, and in 1864 was appointed secretary of the branch Mint, remaining until 1870. Two years before, however, he had become editor of the new *Overland Monthly*, where some of his best work appeared. This position did not prove permanent, and even less so was that of the professorship of 'recent literature' in the University of California. He contributed to the second number of the *Overland Monthly* 'The Luck of Roaring Camp.' In 1871 he moved to New York. In 1878 he became United States Consul at Crefeld, Germany, and in 1880 was transferred to Glasgow, Scotland, holding this post until 1885. His later life was spent chiefly in London, where his brilliant talents brought him full recognition.

Bret Harte was a poet, critic, novelist, and short story writer. His novels give him no such claim to fame as do his other writings. His best sketches and short stories include 'The Luck of Roaring Camp,' 'An Heiress of Red Dog,' 'Miggles,' 'Tennessee's Partner,' 'M'liss,' 'The Idyll of Red Gulch,' 'Brown of Calaveras,' and 'The Outcasts of Poker Flat.' His work is characterised by artistic repression, dramatic feeling, mingled humour and pathos, deft character drawing, a sure sense of a 'good story,' and the ability to win the reader in spite of himself. For themes, he chose — and doubtless over-coloured at times — the people and the happenings of 1849 during the gold craze in California.

Bret Harte's distinctive contribution to the literature of the short story is the emphasis of place, or *locale,* as a strong contributory factor to the general value of the narrative. Nowhere, perhaps, except in the far west of the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century could the action of his best stories occur. Further, he humanized characters in suggesting that the worst man has some good in his make-up.

Julian Hawthorne says of Bret Harte : 'His own style, as finally formed, leaves little to be desired ; it is clear, flexible, virile, laconic and withal graceful. Its full meaning is given to every word, and occasionally, like all original masters of prose, he imparts into a familiar word a racier significance than it had possessed before. His genius is nowhere more unmistakable than in the handling of his stories, which is terse to the point of severity, yet wholly adequate ; everything necessary to the matter in hand is told but with an economy of word and phrase that betokens a powerful and radical conception.'

I DO not think that we ever knew his real name. Our ignorance of it certainly never gave us any social inconvenience, for at Sandy Bar in 1854 most men were christened anew. Sometimes these appellatives were derived from some distinctiveness of dress, as in the case of 'Dungaree Jack' ; or from some peculiarity of habit, as shown in 'Saleratus Bill,' so called from an undue proportion of that chemical in his daily bread ; or from some unlucky slip, as exhibited in 'The Iron Pirate,' a mild, inoffensive man, who earned that baleful title by his unfortunate mispronunciation of the term 'iron pyrites.' Perhaps this may have been the beginning of a rude heraldry ; but I am constrained to think that it was because a man's real name in that day rested solely upon his own unsupported statement.

'Call yourself Clifford, do you?' said Boston, addressing a timid newcomer with infinite scorn; 'hell is full of such Cliffords!' He then introduced the unfortunate man, whose name happened to be really Clifford, as 'Jay-bird Charley,' — an unhallowed inspiration of the moment that clung to him ever after.

But to return to Tennessee's Partner, whom we never knew by any other than this relative title; that he had ever existed as a separate and distinct individuality we only learned later. It seems that in 1853 he left Poker Flat to go to San Francisco, ostensibly to procure a wife.

He never got any farther than Stockton. At that place he was attracted by a young person who waited upon the table at the hotel where he took his meals. One morning he said something to her which caused her to smile not unkindly, to somewhat coquettishly break a plate of toast over his upturned, serious, simple face, and to retreat to the kitchen. He followed her, and emerged a few moments later, covered with more toast and victory. That day week they were married by a Justice of the Peace, and returned to Poker Flat. I am aware that something more might be made of this episode, but I prefer to tell it as it was current at Sandy Bar, — in the gulches and bar-rooms, — where all sentiment was modified by a strong sense of humour.

Of their married felicity but little is known, perhaps for the reason that Tennessee, then living with his partner, one day took occasion to say something to the bride on his own account, at which, it is said, she smiled not unkindly and chastely retreated, — this time as far as Marysville, where Tennessee followed her, and where they went to

housekeeping without the aid of a Justice of the Peace. Tennessee's Partner took the loss of his wife simply and seriously, as was his fashion. But to everybody's surprise, when Tennessee one day returned from Marysville, without his partner's wife, — she having smiled and retreated with somebody else, — Tennessee's Partner was the first man to shake his hand and greet him with affection. The boys who had gathered in the canyon to see the shooting were naturally indignant. Their indignation might have found vent in sarcasm but for a certain look in Tennessee's Partner's eye that indicated a lack of humorous appreciation. In fact, he was a grave man, with a steady application to practical detail which was unpleasant in a difficulty.

Meanwhile a popular feeling against Tennessee had grown up on the Bar. He was known to be a gambler; he was suspected to be a thief. In these suspicions Tennessee's Partner was equally compromised; his continued intimacy with Tennessee after the affair above quoted could only be accounted for on the hypothesis of a copartnership of crime. At last Tennessee's guilt became flagrant. One day he overtook a stranger on his way to Red Dog. The stranger afterward related that Tennessee beguiled the time with interesting anecdote and reminiscence, but illogically concluded the interview in the following words: 'And now, young man, I'll trouble you for your knife, your pistols, and your money. You see your weppings might get you into trouble at Red Dog, and your money's a temptation to the evilly disposed. I think you said your address was San Francisco. I shall endeavour to call.' It may be stated here that Tennessee had a fine flow of humour, which no business preoccupation could wholly subdue.

This exploit was his last. Red Dog and Sandy Bar made common cause against the highwayman. Tennessee was hunted in very much the same fashion as his prototype, the Grizzly. As the toils closed around him, he made a desperate dash through the Bar, emptying his revolver at the crowd before the Arcade Saloon, and so on up Grizzly Canyon; but at its farther extremity he was stopped by a small man on a gray horse. The men looked at each other a moment in silence. Both were fearless, both self-possessed and independent; and both types of a civilization that in the seventeenth century would have been called heroic, but, in the nineteenth, simply 'reckless'. 'What have you got there?—I call,' said Tennessee, quietly. 'Two bowers and an ace,' said the stranger, as quietly, showing two revolvers and a bowie-knife. 'That takes me,' returned Tennessee; and with this gamblers' epigram, he threw away his useless pistol, and rode back with his captor.

It was a warm night. The cool breeze which usually sprang up with the going down of the sun behind the chaparral-crested mountain was that evening withheld from Sandy Bar. The little canyon was stifling with heated resinous odours, and the decaying drift-wood on the Bar sent forth faint, sickening exhalations. The feverishness of day, and its fierce passions, still filled the camp. Lights moved restlessly along the bank of the river, striking no answering reflection from its tawny current. Against the blackness of the pines the windows of the old loft above the express-office stood out startlingly bright; and through their curtainless panes the loungers below could see the forms of those who were even then deciding the fate of Tennessee. And above all this, etched on the dark firmament,

rose the Sierra, remote and passionless, crowned with remoter passionless stars.

The trial of Tennessee was conducted as fairly as was consistent with a Judge and Jury who felt themselves to some extent obliged to justify, in their verdict, the previous irregularities of arrest and indictment. The law of Sandy Bar was implacable, but not vengeful. The excitement and personal feeling of the chase were over; with Tennessee safe in their hands they were ready to listen patiently to any defence, which they were already satisfied was insufficient. There being no doubt in their own minds, they were willing to give the prisoner the benefit of any that might exist. Secure in the hypothesis that he ought to be hanged, on general principles, they indulged him with more latitude of defence than his reckless hardihood seemed to ask. The Judge appeared to be more anxious than the prisoner, who, otherwise unconcerned, evidently took a grim pleasure in the responsibility he had created. 'I don't take any hand in this yer game,' had been his invariable, but good-humoured reply to all questions. The Judge — who was also his captor — for a moment vaguely regretted that he had not shot him 'on sight,' that morning, but presently dismissed this human weakness as unworthy of the judicial mind. Nevertheless, when there was a tap at the door, and it was said that Tennessee's Partner was there on behalf of the prisoner, he was admitted at once without question. Perhaps the younger members of the jury, to whom the proceedings were becoming irksomely thoughtful, hailed him as a relief.

For he was not, certainly, an imposing figure. Short and stout, with a square face, sunburned into a preternatural redness, clad in a loose duck

'jumper,' and trousers streaked and splashed with red soil, his aspect under any circumstances would have been quaint, and was now even ridiculous. As he stooped to deposit at his feet a heavy carpet-bag he was carrying, it became obvious, from partially developed legends and inscriptions, that the material with which his trousers had been patched had been originally intended for a less ambitious covering. Yet he advanced with great gravity, and after having shaken the hand of each person in the room with laboured cordiality, he wiped his serious, perplexed face on a red bandanna handkerchief, a shade lighter than his complexion, laid his powerful hand upon the table to steady himself, and thus addressed the Judge:

'I was passin' by,' he began, by way of apology, 'and I thought I'd just step in and see how things was gittin' on with Tennessee thar,— my pardner. It's a hot night. I disremember any such weather before on the Bar.'

He paused a moment, but nobody volunteering any other meteorological recollection, he again had recourse to his pocket-handkerchief, and for some moments mopped his face diligently.

'Have you anything to say in behalf of the prisoner?' said the Judge, finally.

'Thet's it,' said Tennessee's Partner in a tone of relief. 'I come yar as Tennessee's pardner,— knowing him nigh on four year, off and on, wet and dry, in luck and out o' luck. His ways ain't allers my ways, but thar ain't any p'ints in that young man, thar ain't any liveliness as he's been up to, as I don't know. And you sez to me, sez you,— confidential-like, and between man and man,— sez you, "Do you know anything in his behalf?" and I sez

to you, sez I, — confidential-like, as between man and man,—"What should a man know of his pardner?" '

'Is this all you have to say?' asked the Judge, impatiently, feeling, perhaps, that a dangerous sympathy of humour was beginning to humanize the court.

'Thet's so,' continued Tennessee's Partner. 'It ain't for me to say anything agin' him. And now, what's the case? Here's Tennessee wants money, wants it bad, and doesn't like to ask it of his old pardner. Well, what does Tennessee do? He lays for a stranger, and he fetches that stranger. And you lays for *him,* and you fetches *him*; and the honours is easy. And I put it to you, bein' a far-minded man, and to you, gentlemen, all, as far-minded men, ef this isn't so.'

'Prisoner,' said the Judge, interrupting, 'have you any questions to ask this man?'

'No! no!' continued Tennessee's Partner, hastily. 'I play this yer hand alone. To come down to the bed-rock, it's just this: Tennessee, thar, has played it pretty rough and expensive-like on a stranger, and on this yer camp. And now, what's the fair thing? Some would say more; some would say less. Here's seventeen hundred dollars in coarse gold and a watch, — it's about all my pile, — and call it square!' And before a hand could be raised to prevent him, he had emptied the contents of the carpet-bag upon the table.

For a moment his life was in jeopardy. One or two men sprang to their feet, several hands groped for hidden weapons, and a suggestion to 'throw him from the window' was only overridden by a gesture from the Judge. Tennessee laughed. And apparently oblivious of the excitement,

Tennessee's Partner improved the opportunity to mop his face again with his handkerchief.

When order was restored, and the man was made to understand, by the use of forcible figures and rhetoric, that Tennessee's offence could not be condoned by money, his face took a more serious and sanguinary hue, and those who were nearest to him noticed that his rough hand trembled slightly on the table. He hesitated a moment as he slowly returned the gold to the carpet-bag, as if he had not yet entirely caught the elevated sense of justice which swayed the tribunal, and was perplexed with the belief that he had not offered enough. Then he turned to the Judge, and saying, 'This yer is a lone hand, played alone, and without my pardner,' he bowed to the jury and was about to withdraw, when the Judge called him back. 'If you have anything to say to Tennessee, you had better say it now.' For the first time that evening the eyes of the prisoner and his strange advocate met. Tennessee smiled, showed his white teeth, and, saying, 'Euchred, old man!' held out his hand. Tennessee's Partner took it in his own, and saying, 'I just dropped in as I was passin' to see how things was gettin' on,' let the hand passively fall, and adding that 'it was a warm night,' again mopped his face with his handkerchief, and without another word withdrew.

The two men never again met each other alive. For the unparalleled insult of a bribe offered to Judge Lynch— who, whether bigoted, weak, or narrow, was at least incorruptible — firmly fixed in the mind of that mythical personage any wavering determination of Tennessee's fate; and at the break of day he was marched, closely guarded, to meet it at the top of Marley's Hill.

How he met it, how cool he was, how he refused to say anything, how perfect were the arrangements of the committee, were all duly reported, with the addition of a warning moral and example to all future evil-doers, in the *Red Dog Clarion*, by its editor, who was present, and to whose vigorous English I cheerfully refer the reader. But the beauty of that midsummer morning, the blessed amity of earth and air and sky, the awakened life of the free woods and hills, the joyous renewal and promise of Nature, and above all, the infinite Serenity that thrilled through each, was not reported, as not being a part of the social lesson. And yet, when the weak and foolish deed was done, and a life, with its possibilities and responsibilities, had passed out of the mis-shapen thing that dangled between earth and sky, the birds sang, the flowers bloomed, the sun shone, as cheerily as before; and possibly the *Red Dog Clarion* was right.

Tennessee's Partner was not in the group that surrounded the ominous tree. But as they turned to disperse, attention was drawn to the singular appearance of a motionless donkey-cart halted at the side of the road. As they approached, they at once recognized the venerable 'Jenny' and the two-wheeled cart as the property of Tennessee's Partner, — used by him in carrying dirt from his claim; and a few paces distant the owner of the equipage himself, sitting under a buckeye-tree, wiping the perspiration from his glowing face. In answer to an inquiry, he said he had come for the body of the 'diseased,' 'if it was all the same to the committee.' He didn't wish to 'hurry anything'; he could 'wait.' He was not working that day; and when the gentlemen were done with the

'diseased' he would take him. 'Ef thar is any present,' he added, in his simple, serious way, 'as would care to jine in the fun'l, they kin come.' Perhaps it was from a sense of humour, which I have already intimated was a feature of Sandy Bar, — perhaps it was from something even better than that; but two-thirds of the loungers accepted the invitation at once.

It was noon when the body of Tennessee was delivered into the hands of his partner. As the cart drew up to the fatal tree, we noticed that it contained a rough, oblong box, — apparently made from a section of sluicing, and half-filled with bark and the tassels of pine. The cart was further decorated with slips of willow, and made fragrant with buckeye-blossoms. When the body was deposited in the box, Tennessee's Partner drew over it a piece of tarred canvas, and gravely mounting the narrow seat in front, with his feet upon the shafts, urged the little donkey forward. The equipage moved slowly on, at that decorous pace which was habitual with 'Jenny' even under less solemn circumstances. The men — half curiously, half jestingly, but all good-humouredly — strolled along beside the cart; some in advance, some a little in the rear of the homely catafalque. But, whether from the narrowing of the road or some present sense of decorum, as the cart passed on, the company fell to the rear in couples, keeping step, and otherwise assuming the external show of a formal procession. Jack Folinsbee, who had at the outset played a funeral march in dumb show upon an imaginary trombone, desisted, from a lack of sympathy and appreciation, — not having, perhaps, your true humorist's capacity to be content with the enjoyment of his own fun.

The way led through Grizzly Canyon, — by this time clothed in funeral drapery and shadows. The redwoods, burying their moccasined feet in the red soil, stood in Indian-file along the track, trailing an uncouth benediction from their bending boughs upon the passing bier. A hare, surprised into helpless inactivity, sat upright and pulsating in the ferns by the roadside, as the *cortege* went by. Squirrels hastened to gain a secure outlook from higher boughs; and the blue-jays, spreading their wings, fluttered before them like outriders, until the outskirts of Sandy Bar were reached, and the solitary cabin of Tennessee's Partner.

Viewed under more favourable circumstances, it would not have been a cheerful place. The unpicturesque site, the rude and unlovely outlines, the unsavoury details, which distinguish the nest-building of the California miner, were all here, with the dreariness of decay superadded. A few paces from the cabin there was a rough enclosure, which, in the brief days of Tennessee's Partner's matrimonial felicity, had been used as a garden, but was now overgrown with fern. As we approached it we were surprised to find that what we had taken for a recent attempt at cultivation was the broken soil about an open grave.

The cart was halted before the enclosure; and rejecting the offers of assistance with the same air of simple self-reliance he had displayed throughout, Tennessee's Partner lifted the rough coffin on his back, and deposited it, unaided, within the shallow grave. He then nailed down the board which served as a lid; and mounting the little mound of earth beside it, took off his hat, and slowly mopped his face with his handkerchief. This the crowd felt was a preliminary to speech; and they disposed

themselves variously on stumps and boulders, and sat expectant.

'When a man,' began Tennessee's Partner, slowly, 'has been running free all day, what's the natural thing for him to do? Why, to come home. And if he ain't in a condition to go home, what can his best friend do? Why, bring him home! And here's Tennessee has been running free, and we brings him home from his wandering.' He paused, and picked up a fragment of quartz, rubbed it thoughtfully on his sleeve, and went on: 'It ain't the first time that I've packed him on my back, as you see'd me now. It ain't the first time that I brought him to this yer cabin when he couldn't help himself; it ain't the first time that I and Jinny have waited for him on yon hill, and picked him up and so fetched him home, when he couldn't speak, and didn't know me. And now that it's the last time, why —' he paused, and rubbed the quartz gently on his sleeve — 'you see it's sort of rough on his pardner. And now, gentlemen,' he added, abruptly, picking up his long-handled shovel, 'the fun'l's over; and my thanks, and Tennessee's thanks, to you for your trouble.'

Resisting any proffers of assistance, he began to fill in the grave, turning his back upon the crowd that after a few moments' hesitation gradually withdrew. As they crossed the little ridge that hid Sandy Bar from view, some, looking back, thought they could see Tennessee's Partner, his work done, sitting upon the grave, his shovel between his knees, and his face buried in his red bandanna handkerchief. But it was argued by others that you couldn't tell his face from his handkerchief at that distance; and this point remained undecided.

In the reaction that followed the feverish excitement of that day, Tennessee's Partner was not forgotten. A secret investigation had cleared him of any complicity in Tennessee's guilt, and left only a suspicion of his general sanity. Sandy Bar made a point of calling on him, and proffering various uncouth, but well-meant kindnesses. But from that day his rude health and great strength seemed visibly to decline; and when the rainy season fairly set in, and the tiny grass-blades were beginning to peep from the rocky mound above Tennessee's grave, he took to his bed.

One night, when the pines beside the cabin were swaying in the storm, and trailing their slender fingers over the roof, and the roar and rush of the swollen river were heard below, Tennessee's Partner lifted his head from the pillow, saying, 'It is time to go for Tennessee; I must put "Jinny" in the cart'; and would have risen from his bed but for the restraint of his attendant. Struggling, he still pursued his singular fancy: 'There, now, steady, Jinny, — steady, old girl. How dark it is! Look out for the ruts, — and look out for him, too, old gal. Sometimes, you know, when he's blind drunk, he drops down right in the trail. Keep on straight up to the pine on the top of the hill. Thar — I told you so! — thar he is, — coming this way, too, — all by himself, sober, and his face a-shining. Tennessee! Partner!'

And so they met.

THE NECKLACE

By Guy de Maupassant

Guy de Maupassant (1850–1893) belonged to a noble family of Normandy in France. He was educated in his early years at his home in Étretat.

When he was thirteen, his mother, recognizing that he was ready for other lessons, placed him in a seminary at Yvetot. Guy worked hard in the *lycée*. Perhaps, however, he was more interested in modern poetry than in the classics, and he developed also a love for the theatre.

From 1871 to 1880 may be regarded as the period of immediate preparation for De Maupassant's life-work. From 1873 to 1880 he was studying constantly with Flaubert, his uncle, who was the foremost short story writer of the time. His mother feared, as the period of study prolonged itself and her son accomplished little, that he was forgetting his high calling. 'But,' he said, 'nothing presses me; I am learning my profession.'

Guy's writing, at this time, consisted mostly of verses which he submitted to Flaubert for comment and criticism. As he gradually developed an individual manner of seeing and feeling, he was eager to begin publishing his work. But the master held him back from publication. 'We don't want to make a flash in the pan,' he cautioned. Between 1872 and 1880 De Maupassant published a number of poems. So rigid an apprenticeship did he serve under Flaubert that when he produced his first short story, 'Tallow Ball' *(Baule de Suif)*, his preceptor pronounced it a masterpiece, as indeed it is. Its success was overwhelming and gave to the author a definite assurance that he should turn to the novel and the romance, to fiction rather than to poetry.

The great decade of his life had begun. From 1880 to 1890 he published a long list of works, either short stories or novels, marvellous for showing his fecundity.

Though his productive period covered only ten years, Guy de Maupassant has left several notable novels, some fair poetry, and a large number of remarkable short stories. Most of his work deals more frankly with the sordid side of life than many readers approve, but many of his short stories are unexceptionable. Among the best of these are 'The Necklace,' 'The Horla,' 'Happiness,' 'Vain Beauty,' 'A Coward,' 'A Ghost,' 'Little Soldier,' 'The Wolf,' 'Moonlight,' and 'The Piece of String.' He produced about thirty volumes of stories, most of them dealing with the peasants of Normandy, whom he knew so well.

Technically, De Maupassant was the most finished short story writer of all; but he lacked spiritual power, and so he missed much of the world's beauty, and disclosed but little to others. His stories in general show us the mind of a pessimist who sees no real meaning or purpose in life. Rarely can the reader feel the least throb of sympathy of the author for his characters. Technically flawless, his work is too often cold and cynical. He was an inflexible realist. From life's raw materials he wove incomparably brilliant fiction-fabrics, equally distinguished for plot, characterization, and style; but it cannot be said that he interpreted life with a wholesome, uplifting spirit.

It is sad to think that his brilliant mind gave way under constant excitement and opiates, and he died at the early age of forty-three.

She was one of those pretty and charming girls who, as if by an error of destiny, are born into a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no expectations, no means of being known, understood, loved, wedded, by any rich and distinguished man, and she let herself be married to a minor clerk at the Ministry of Public Instruction.

She dressed plainly since she could not dress well, but she was as unhappy as a woman who has

really fallen from her proper station; for women have neither caste nor race; their beauty, grace, and charm act instead of family and birth. Natural fineness, instinct for what is elegant, suppleness of wit, are their sole hierarchy, and make from women of the people the equals of the greatest of great ladies.

She suffered endlessly, feeling herself born for all the delicacies and all the luxuries of life. She suffered on account of the poverty of her dwelling, from the wretched look of the walls, from the dilapidated chairs, from the ugliness of the curtains. All those things of which another woman of her caste would never even have been conscious, tortured her and made her angry. The sight of the little Breton servant who did her humble housework aroused in her despairing regrets and distracted dreams. She thought of the silent antechambers hung with Oriental fabrics, lighted by tall bronze candelabra, and with two great footmen in knee-breeches who dozed in the big arm-chairs, made drowsy by the heavy warmth of the stove. She dreamed of the long saloons fitted up with old silk, of the delicate furniture carrying priceless curiosities, and of the coquettish perfumed boudoirs made for talks at five o'clock with intimate friends, with men famous and sought after, whose notice all women envy and desire.

When she sat down to dine before the round table covered with a cloth three days old, opposite her husband, who, as he uncovered the soup-tureen, declared with an enchanted air, 'Ah, the good old stew! I don't know anything better than that,' she thought of dainty dinners, of gleaming silverware, of tapestry which peopled the walls with ancient personages and with strange birds in the midst of

a fairy forest; and she dreamed of delicious dishes served on wondrous plates, and of the whispered gallantries to which you listen with a sphinxlike smile, while eating the pink flesh of a trout or the wing of a fowl.

She had no fine dresses, no jewels, nothing. And she loved nothing else; she felt that she was made for that. She would so have liked to please, to be envied, to be charming and sought after.

She had a rich friend, a former schoolmate at the convent, whom she did not like to go and see any more, because she suffered so much when she came home. She wept whole days.

One evening her husband returned home with a conqueror's air, holding a large envelope in his hand.

'There,' said he, 'is something for you.'

She tore the paper sharply, and drew out a printed card on which were these words:

'The Minister of Public Instruction and Mme. Georges Ramponneau ask the honour of M. and Mme. Loisel's company at the palace of the Ministry on Monday evening, January 18th.'

Instead of being overjoyed, as her husband hoped, she threw the invitation on the table with disdain, murmuring:

'What do you expect me to do with that?'

'Why, my dear, I thought you would be glad. You never go out, and this is a fine opportunity! I had tremendous difficulty in getting it. Every one wants to go; they are greatly sought after, and they are not giving many to clerks. The whole official world will be there.'

She looked at him with an irritated eye, and said, impatiently:

'And what do you expect me to put on my back?'

He had not thought of that.

'Why,' he stammered, 'the dress you wear to the theatre. It looks very well to me —'

He stopped, stupefied, seeing that his wife was weeping. Two great tears ran slowly from the corners of her eyes towards the corners of her mouth.

'What's the matter?' he stuttered. 'What's the matter?'

But by a violent effort she had conquered her grief, and she replied, in a calm voice, as she wiped her wet cheeks:

'Nothing; only I have no dress, and therefore I can't go to this ball. Give your card to some colleague whose wife is better equipped than I.'

He was in despair. He resumed:

'Come, let us see, Mathilde. How much would it cost, a suitable dress which you could use on other occasions; something very simple?'

She reflected a few seconds, making her calculations and also wondering what sum she could ask without drawing on herself an immediate refusal and a shocked exclamation from the economical clerk.

Finally she replied, hesitatingly:

'I don't know exactly, but I think I could manage with four hundred francs.'

He grew a little pale, for he had laid aside just that amount to buy a gun and treat himself to a little summer shooting on the plain of Nanterre, with several friends who went to shoot larks down there, on Sundays.

But he said:

'All right. I will give you four hundred francs. And try to have a pretty dress.'

The day of the ball drew near, and Mme. Loisel seemed sad, uneasy, anxious. Her dress was ready, however. Her husband said to her one evening:

'What is the matter? Come, you've been very queer these last three days.'

And she replied:

'It annoys me to have not a single jewel, not a single stone, nothing to put on. I shall look like distress. I should almost rather not go at all.'

He rejoined:

'You might wear natural flowers. They are very stylish at this time of year. For ten francs you can get two or three magnificent roses.'

She was not convinced.

'No; there's nothing more humiliating than to look poor among other women who are rich.'

But her husband cried:

'How stupid you are! Go hunt up your friend Mme. Forestier, and ask her to lend you some jewels. You're quite thick enough with her to do that.'

She uttered a cry of joy.

'It's true. I never thought of that.'

The next day she went to her friend and told of her trouble.

Mme. Forestier went to a wardrobe with a glass door, took out a large jewel-case, brought it back to Mme. Loisel, opened it, and said:

'Choose, my dear.'

She saw first of all some bracelets, then a pearl necklace, then a Venetian cross, all gold and precious stones, an admirable piece of workmanship. She tried on the ornaments before the glass, hesitated, could not make up her mind to part with them, to give them back. She kept asking:

'Haven't you any more?'

'Why, yes, look. I don't know what may strike your fancy.'

Suddenly she discovered in a black satin box a superb necklace of diamonds; and her heart began to beat with an immoderate desire. Her hands trembled as she took it up. She fastened it around her throat, outside her high-necked dress, and remained lost in ecstasy at the sight of her own image.

Then she asked, hesitatingly, in an anguish of suspense:

'Can you lend me this, only this?'

'Why, yes, certainly.'

She sprang upon the neck of her friend, kissed her passionately, then fled with her treasure.

The day of the ball arrived. Mme. Loisel made a triumph. She was prettier than them all,—elegant, gracious, smiling, and mad with joy. All the men stared at her, asked her name, endeavoured to be introduced. All the attachés of the Cabinet wanted to waltz with her. She was noticed by the Minister himself.

She danced with intoxication, with passion, drunk with pleasure, forgetting all in the triumph of her beauty, in the glory of her success, in a sort of cloud of happiness composed of all that homage, of all that admiration, of all those awakened desires, and of that complete victory which is so sweet to woman's heart.

She left about four o'clock in the morning. Her husband had been sleeping since midnight in a little deserted anteroom, with three other gentlemen whose wives were having a very good time.

He threw over her shoulders the wraps which he had brought — modest garments of everyday

life, whose poverty contrasted with the elegance of her ball dress. She felt this, and wanted to escape so as not to be noticed by the other women who were enveloping themselves in costly furs.

Loisel held her back.

'Wait a little. You'll catch cold outside. I'll go and call a cab.'

She did not heed him, but rapidly descended the stairs. When they were in the street, they could not find a disengaged carriage, and began to look for one, shouting after the cabmen whom they saw passing at a distance.

They went down towards the Seine, in despair, shivering with cold. At last they found on the quay one of those ancient noctambulant coupés, which, just as if they were ashamed to uncover their misery during the day, are never seen in Paris until after nightfall.

It took them to their door in the Rue des Martyrs, and once more, now sadly, they climbed up to their apartment. All was ended for her. And as for him, he reflected that he must be at the Ministry by ten o'clock.

She removed the wraps which covered her shoulders, standing before the glass, so as once more to see herself in all her glory. But suddenly she uttered a cry. The necklace was no longer around her neck!

Her husband, already half undressed, demanded: 'What is the matter with you?'

She turned madly towards him. 'I have — I have — I've lost Mme. Forestier's necklace.'

He sprang up, distracted. 'What! — how? — Impossible!'

And they looked in the folds of the dress,

in the folds of the cloak, in all the pockets, everywhere. They did not find it.

He asked: 'You're sure you had it on when you left the ball?'

'Yes, I felt it in the vestibule of the palace.'

'But, if you had lost it in the street we should have heard it fall. It must be in the cab.'

'Yes. Probably. Did you take the number?'

'No.'

'Didn't you notice it?'

'No.'

Thunderstruck, they looked at one another. At last Loisel put on his clothes.

'I shall go back on foot,' said he, 'over the whole distance we walked, to see if I can't find it.'

And he went out. She sat there on a chair in her ball dress, without strength to go to bed, overwhelmed, without fire, without a thought.

Her husband came back about seven o'clock. He had found nothing.

He went to Police Headquarters, to the newspaper offices, to offer a reward; he went to the cab companies — everywhere, in fact, whither he was urged by the least suspicion of hope.

She waited all day, in the same state of mad fear in the face of this terrible calamity.

Loisel returned at night with hollow, pale, cheeks; he had discovered nothing.

'You must write to your friend,' said he, 'that you have broken the clasp of her necklace, and that you are having it mended. That will give us time to turn around.'

She wrote at his dictation.

At the end of a week they had lost all hope.

And Loisel, who had aged five years, declared:

'We must consider how to replace the necklace.'

The next day they took the box which had contained it, and they went to the jeweller whose name was within. He consulted his books.

'It was not I, Madame, who sold that necklace; I simply furnished the case.'

Then they went from jeweller to jeweller, searching for a necklace like the other, consulting their memories, fairly sick, both of them, with chagrin and with anguish.

In a shop at the Palais Royal they found a string of diamonds which seemed to them exactly like the one she had lost. It was worth forty thousand francs, but they could have it for thirty-six thousand.

So they begged the jeweller not to sell it for three days, making a bargain that he should buy it back for thirty-four thousand francs, in case they found the lost necklace before the end of February.

Loisel had eighteen thousand francs which his father had left him. He would borrow the rest.

He did borrow, asking a thousand francs of one, five hundred of another, five louis here, three louis there. He gave notes, assumed ruinous obligations, dealt with usurers, and all the race of money lenders. He compromised all the rest of his life, risked his signature without even knowing if he would be able to meet it; and, frightened by the pangs yet to come, by the black misery which was about to fall upon him, by the prospect of all the physical privations and of all the moral tortures he was yet to suffer, he went for the new necklace and put down upon the merchant's counter the thirty-six thousand francs.

When Mme. Loisel returned the necklace Mme. Forestier said, with a chilly manner :

'You ought to have returned it sooner. I might have needed it.'

However, she did not open the case, as her friend had so much dreaded. If she had detected the substitution, what would she have thought, what would she have said? Would she not have taken her for a thief?

Madame Loisel now experienced the horrible existence of the needy. But she took her part, all on a sudden, with real heroism. That dreadful debt must be paid. She would pay it. They dismissed their servant; they changed their lodgings; they rented a garret under the roof.

She came to know what heavy housework meant and the odious tasks of the kitchen. She washed the dishes, wearing away her rosy nails on the greasy pots and pans. She washed the dirty linen, the shirts and dish cloths, which she dried upon a line; she carried the slops down to the street every morning, and carried up the water, stopping to take breath at every landing. And, dressed like a woman of the people, she went to the fruiterer's, the grocer's, the butcher's, her basket on her arm, bargaining, insulted, defending her pitiful money sou by sou.

Each month they had to meet some notes, renew others, beg for more time.

Her husband worked evenings straightening out some tradesman's accounts, and late at night he would copy manuscript for five sous a page.

And this life lasted ten years.

At the end of ten years they had paid everything, everything, with the charges of usurers, and the accumulations of compound interest.

Mme. Loisel looked old now. She had become the woman of impoverished households — strong and hard and rough. With frowsy hair, skirts askew, and red hands, she talked loudly while washing the floor with great splashing of water. But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she sat down near the window, and she thought of that gay evening of long ago, of that ball where she had been so fair and so fêted.

What would have happened if she had not lost that necklace? Who knows? Who knows? How strange is life, and how changeful! How little a thing is needed to ruin or to save us!

But one Sunday, having gone to take a walk in the Champs Elysees to refresh herself after the labours of the week, she suddenly observed a woman who was leading a child. It was Mme. Forestier, still young, still beautiful, still fascinating.

Mme. Loisel was moved. Should she speak to her? Yes, certainly. And now that she had paid, she was going to tell her all about it. Why not?

She approached her.

'Good-day, Jeanne.'

The other, astonished at being familiarly addressed by this plain goodwife, did not recognize her at all, and stammered:

'But — Madame! — I don't know — you must be mistaken.'

'No, I am Mathilde Loisel.'

Her friend uttered a cry.

'Oh, my poor Mathilde! How you have changed!'

'Yes, I have had days hard enough since I last saw you, days wretched enough — and all because of you!'

'Because of me! How so?'

'You remember that diamond necklace you lent me to wear at the Ministers' ball?'

'Yes. Well?'

'Well, I lost it.'

'What do you mean? You brought it back.'

'I brought you another just like it. And we have been ten years paying for it. You may imagine that it was not easy for us — who had nothing. But at last it is ended, and I am very glad.'

Mme. Forestier stopped.

'You say that you bought a diamond necklace to replace mine?'

'Yes. You never noticed it, then! They were very like.'

And she smiled with a joy which was at once proud and naïve.

Mme. Forestier, strongly moved, took her two hands.

'Oh, my poor Mathilde! Why, my necklace was paste. It was worth at most five hundred francs!'

A GALA DRESS

By Mary Eleanor Wilkins Freeman

Mary Eleanor Wilkins (1862-), later Mrs. Freeman, is the interpreter of New England, as the North-Eastern section of the United States is called. America is so large that it is difficult to write a book which will make a picture of the whole nation. That is one reason why so many American authors succeed best when they write of the people in that part of the country that they know best.

Mary Wilkins grew up in a New England factory town, where she saw many overworked and poverty-stricken men and women, and a great deal of human misery. She felt the grimness of life, and this same sense of hardship and grimness has found its way into most of her stories.

Her first story, 'A Humble Romance,' the experiences of a poor little bound-out girl rescued from drudgery and married by a kind-hearted tin pedlar, attracted much attention when it appeared in Harper's Magazine, and her stories at once became popular.

For fifty years she has turned out story after story and volume after volume, reflecting the life of village and farm. In the latter half of this period she has also written charming stories about children in her later environment, for since her marriage she has lived in a town not far from New York.

In her New England stories she describes the hardened farmer, his patient wife, and his meek children. Grandmothers and grandfathers, old ladies and old men who fear the poor-house, and old maids of the aristocracy, as well as of the humbler classes, who strain to 'make both ends meet,' are also among her favourites. 'A Gala Dress' celebrates three of her numerous old maids.

Among her best-known stories are 'A New England Nun,' 'A Humble Romance,' 'Silence,' 'The Love of Parson Lord,' 'The Givers,' 'The Winning Lady,' and 'The Copy-Cat'.

'I DON'T care anything about going to that Fourth of July picnic, 'Liz'beth.'

'I wouldn't say anything more about it, if I was you, Emily. I'd get ready an' go.'

'I don't really feel able to go, 'Liz'beth.'

'I'd like to know why you ain't able.'

'It seems to me as if the fire-crackers an' the tootin' on those horns would drive me crazy; an' Matilda Jennings says they're goin' to have a cannon down there, an' fire it off every half-hour. I don't feel as if I could stan' it. You know my nerves ain't very strong, 'Liz'beth.'

Elizabeth Babcock uplifted her long, delicate nose, with its transparent nostrils, and sniffed. Apparently her sister's perverseness had an unacceptable odour to her. 'I wouldn't talk so if I was you, Em'ly. Of course you're goin'. It's your turn to, an' you know it. I went to meetin' last Sabbath. You just put on that dress an' go.'

Emily eyed her sister. She tried not to look pleased. 'I know you went to meetin' last,' said she, hesitatingly; 'but—a Fourth of July picnic is—a little more of—a rarity.' She fairly jumped, her sister confronted her with such sudden vigour.

'Rarity! Well, I hope a Fourth of July picnic ain't quite such a treat to me that I'd rather go to it than meetin'! I should think you'd be ashamed of yourself speakin' so, Em'ly Babcock.'

Emily, a moment before delicately alert and nervous like her sister, shrank limply in her limp black muslin. 'I—didn't think how it sounded, 'Liz'beth.'

'Well, I should say you'd better think. It don't sound very becomin' for a woman of your age, an' professin' what you do. Now you'd better

go an' get out that dress, an' rip the velvet off, an' sew the lace on. There won't be any too much time. They'll start early in the mornin'. I'll stir up a cake for you to carry, when I get tea.'

'Don't you s'pose I could get along without a cake?' Emily ventured, tremulously.

'Well, I shouldn't think you'd want to go, an' be beholden to other folks for your eatin'; I shouldn't.'

'I shouldn't want anything to eat.'

'I guess, if you go, you're goin' like other folks. I ain't goin' to have Matilda Jennings peekin' an' pryin' an' tellin' things, if I know it. You'd better get out that dress.'

'Well,' said Emily, with a long sigh of remorseful satisfaction. She arose, showing a height that would have approached the majestic had it not been so wavering. The sisters were about the same height, but Elizabeth usually impressed people as being the taller. She carried herself with so much decision that she seemed to keep every inch of her stature firm and taut, old woman though she was.

'Let's see that dress a minute,' she said, when Emily returned. She wiped her spectacles, set them firmly, and began examining the hem of the dress, holding it close to her eyes. 'You're gettin' of it all tagged out,' she declared, presently. 'I thought you was. I thought I see some ravellin's hangin' the other day when I had it on. It's jest because you don't stan' up straight. It ain't any longer for you than it is for me, if you didn't go all bent over so. There ain't any need of it.'

Emily oscillated wearily over her sister and the dress. 'I ain't very strong in my back, an' you know I've got a weakness in my stomach that hinders me from standin' up as straight as you

do,' she rejoined, rallying herself for a feeble defence.

'You can stan' up jest as well as I can, if you're a mind to'.

'I'll rip that velvet off now, if you'll let me have the dress, 'Liz'beth.'

Elizabeth passed over the dress, handling it gingerly.

'Mind you don't cut it rippin' of it off,' said she.

Emily sat down, and the dress lay in shiny black billows over her lap. The dress was black silk, and had been in its day very soft and heavy; even now there was considerable wear left in it. The waist and overskirt were trimmed with black velvet ribbon. Emily ripped off the velvet; then she sewed on some old-fashioned, straight-edged black lace full of little embroidered sprigs. The sisters sat in their parlour at the right of the front door. The room was very warm, for there were two west windows, and a hot afternoon sun was beating upon them. Out in front of the house was a piazza, with a cool uneven brick floor, and a thick lilac growth across the western end. The sisters might have sat there and been comfortable, but they would not.

'Set right out in the face an' eyes of all the neighbours!' they would have exclaimed with dismay had the idea been suggested. There was about these old women and all their belongings a certain gentle and deprecatory reticence. One felt it immediately upon entering their house, or indeed upon coming in sight of it. There were never any heads at the windows; the blinds were usually closed. Once in a while a passer-by might see an old woman, well shielded by shawl and scooping sun-bonnet, start up like a timid spirit in

the yard, and softly disappear through a crack in the front door. Out in the front yard Emily had a little bed of flowers — of balsams and nasturtiums and portulacas; she tended them with furtive glances toward the road. Elizabeth came out in the early morning to sweep the brick floor of the piazza, and the front door was left ajar for a hurried flitting should any one appear.

This excessive shyness and secrecy had almost the aspect of guilt, but no more guileless and upright persons could have been imagined than these two old women. They had over their parlour windows full, softly-falling, old muslin curtains, and they looped them back to leave bare the smallest possible space of glass. The parlour chairs retreated close to the walls, the polish of the parlour table lit up a dim corner. There were very few ornaments in sight; the walls were full of closets and little cupboards, and in them all superfluities were tucked away to protect them from dust and prying eyes. Never a door in the house stood open, every bureau drawer was squarely shut. A whole family of skeletons might have been well hidden in these guarded recesses; but skeletons there were none, except, perhaps, a little innocent bone or two of old-womanly pride and sensitiveness.

The Babcock sisters guarded nothing more jealously than the privacy of their meals. The neighbours considered that there was a decided reason for this. 'The Babcock girls have so little to eat that they're ashamed to let folks see it,' people said. It was certain that the old women regarded intrusion at their meals as an insult, but it was doubtful if they would not have done so had their table been set out with all the luxuries of the season instead of scanty bread and butter and no

sauce. No sauce for tea was regarded as very poor living by the village women.

To-night the Babcocks had tea very soon after the lace was sewed on the dress. They always had tea early. They were in the midst of it when the front-door opened, and a voice was heard calling out in the hall.

The sisters cast a dismayed and indignant look at each other; they both arose; but the door flew open, and their little square tea-table, with its green-and-white china pot of weak tea, its plate of bread and little glass dish of butter, its two china cups, and thin silver tea-spoons, was displayed to view.

'My!' cried the visitor, with a little backward shuffle. 'I do hope you'll 'scuse me! I didn't know you was eatin' supper. I wouldn't ha' come in for the world if I'd known. I'll go right out; it wa'n't anything pertickler, anyhow.' All the time her sharp and comprehensive gaze was on the tea-table. She counted the slices of bread, she measured the butter, as she talked. The sisters stepped forward with dignity.

'Come into the other room,' said Elizabeth; and the visitor, still protesting, with her backward eyes upon the tea-table, gave way before her.

But her eyes lighted upon something in the parlour more eagerly than they had upon the frugal and exclusive table. The sisters glanced at each other in dismay. The black silk dress lay over a chair. The caller, who was their neighbour Matilda Jennings, edged toward it as she talked. 'I thought I'd jest run over, an' see if you wa'n't goin' to the picnic to-morrow,' she was saying. Then she clutched the dress and diverged. 'Oh, you've been fixin' your dress!' she said to Emily, with innocent insinuation. Insinuation did not sit well upon

Matilda Jennings, none of her bodily lines were adapted to it, and the pretence was quite evident. She was short and stout, with a hard, sallow rotundity of cheek, her small black eyes were bright-pointed under fleshy brows.

'Yes, I have,' replied Emily, with a scared glance at Elizabeth.

'Yes,' said Elizabeth, stepping firmly into the subject, and confronting Matilda with prim and resolute blue eyes. 'She has been fixin' of it. The lace was ripped off, an' she had to mend it.'

'It's pretty lace, ain't it? I had some of the same kind on a mantilla once when I was a girl. This makes me think of it. The sprigs in mine were set a little closer. Let me see, 'Liz'beth, your black silk is trimmed with velvet, ain't it?'

Elizabeth surveyed her calmly. 'Yes! I've always worn black velvet on it,' said she.

Emily sighed faintly. She had feared that Elizabeth could not answer desirably and be truthful.

'Let me see,' continued Matilda, 'how was that velvet put on your waist?'

'It was put on peaked.'

'In one peak or two?'

'One.'

'Now I wonder if it would be too much trouble for you jest to let me see it a minute. I've been thinkin' of fixin' over my old alpaca a little, an' I've got a piece of black velvet ribbon I've steamed over, an' it looks pretty good. I thought mebbe I could put in on like yours.'

Matilda Jennings, in her chocolate calico, stood as relentlessly as any executioner before the Babcock sisters. They, slim and delicate and pale in their flabby black muslins, leaned toward each other, then Elizabeth straightened herself. 'Some

time when it's convenient I'd jest as soon show it as, not,' said she.

'Well, I'd be much obleeged to you if you would,' returned Matilda. Her manner was a trifle overawed, but there was a sharper gleam in her eyes. Pretty soon she went home, and ate her solitary and substantial supper of bread and butter, cold potatoes, and pork and beans. Matilda Jennings was as poor as the Babcocks. She had never, like them, known better days. She had never possessed any fine old muslins nor black silks in her life, but she had always eaten more.

The Babcocks had always delicately and unobtrusively felt themselves above her. There had been in their lives a faint savour of gentility and aristocracy. Their father had been college-educated and a doctor. Matilda's antecedents had been humble, even in this humble community. She had come of wood-sawyers and garden-labourers. In their youth, when they had gone to school and played together, they had always realised their height above Matilda, and even old age and poverty and a certain friendliness could not do away with it.

The Babcocks owned their house and a tiny sum in the bank, upon the interest of which they lived. Nobody knew how much it was, nobody would ever know while they lived. They might have had more if they would have sold or mortgaged their house, but they would have died first. They starved daintily and patiently on their little income. They mended their old muslins and Thibets, and wore one dress between them for best, taking turns in going out.

It seemed inconsistent, but the sisters were very fond of society, and their reserve did not interfere with their pleasure in the simple village

outings. They were more at ease abroad than at home, perhaps because there were not present so many doors which could be opened into their secrecy. But they had an arbitrary conviction that their claims to respect and consideration would be forever forfeited should they appear on state occasions in anything but black silk. To their notions of etiquette, black silk was as sacred a necessity as feathers at the English court. They could not go abroad and feel any self-respect in those flimsy muslins and rusty woollens, which were very flimsy and rusty. The old persons in the village could hardly remember when the Babcocks had a new dress. The dainty care with which they had made those tender old fabrics endure so long was wonderful. They held up their skirts primly when they walked; they kept their pointed elbows clear of chairs and tables. The black silk in particular was taken off the minute its wearer entered her own house. It was shaken softly, folded, and laid away in a linen sheet.

Emily was dressed in it on the Fourth of July morning when Matilda Jennings called for her. Matilda came in her voluminous old alpaca, with her tin lunch-pail on her arm. She looked at Emily in the black silk, and her countenance changed. 'My! you ain't goin' to wear that black silk trailin' round in the woods, are you?' said she.

'I guess she won't trail around much,' spoke up Elizabeth. 'She's got to go lookin' decent.'

Matilda's poor old alpaca had many a threadbare streak and mended slit in its rusty folds, the elbows were patched, it was hardly respectable. But she gave the skirt a defiant switch, and jerked the patched elbows. 'Well, I allers believed in goin' dressed suitable for the occasion,' said she,

sturdily, and as if that was her especial picnic costume out of a large wardrobe. However, her bravado was not deeply seated; all day long she manœuvred to keep her patches and darns out of sight, she arranged the skirt nervously every time she changed her position, she held her elbows close to her sides, and she made many little flings at Emily's black silk.

The festivities were nearly over, the dinner had been eaten, Matilda had devoured with relish her brown bread and cheese and cold pork, and Emily had nibbled daintily at her sweet-cake, and glanced with inward loathing at her neighbour's grosser fare. The speeches by the local celebrities were delivered, the cannon had been fired every half-hour, the sun was getting low in the west, and a golden mist was rising among the ferny undergrowth in the grove. 'It's gettin' damp; I can see it risin',' said Emily, who was rheumatic; 'I guess we'd better walk 'round a little, an' then go home.'

'Well,' replied Matilda, 'I'd jest as soon. You'd better hold up your dress.'

The two old women adjusted themselves stiffly upon their feet, and began ranging the grove, stepping warily over the slippery pine-needles. The woods were full of merry calls; the green distances fluttered with light draperies. Every little while came the sharp bang of a fire-cracker, the crash of cannon, or the melancholy hoot of a fish-horn. Now and then blue gunpowder smoke curled up with the golden steam from the dewy ground. Emily was near-sighted; she moved on with innocently peering eyes, her long neck craned forward. Matilda had been taking the lead, but she suddenly stepped aside. Emily walked on

unsuspectingly, holding up her precious black silk. There was a quick puff of smoke, a leap of flame, a volley of vicious little reports, and poor Emily Babcock danced as a martyr at her fiery trial might have done; her gentle dignity completely deserted her. 'Oh, oh, oh!' she shrieked.

Matilda Jennings pushed forward; by that time Emily was standing, pale and quivering, on a little heap of ashes. 'You stepped into a nest of fire-crackers,' said Matilda; 'a boy jest run; I saw him. What made you stan' there in 'em? Why didn't you get out?'

'I — couldn't,' gasped Emily; she could hardly speak.

'Well, I guess it ain't done much harm; them boys ought to be prosecuted. You don't feel as if you was burned anywhere, do you, Em'ly?'

'No — I guess not.'

'Seems to me your dress — Jest let me look at your dress, Em'ly. My! ain't that a wicked shame! Jest look at all them holes, right in the flouncin', where it'll show!'

It was too true. The flounce that garnished the bottom of the black silk was scorched in a number of places. Emily looked at it and felt faint. 'I must go right home,' she moaned. 'Oh, dear!'

'Mebbe you can darn it, if you're real pertickler about it,' said Matilda, with an uneasy air.

Emily said nothing; she went home. Her dress switched the dust off the wayside weeds, but she paid no attention to it; she walked so fast that Matilda could hardly keep up with her. When she reached her own gate she swung it swiftly to before Matilda's face, then she fled into the house.

Elizabeth came to the parlour door with a letter in her hand. She cried out, when she saw her sister's face.

'What *is* the matter, Em'ly, for pity sakes?'

'You can't never go out again, 'Liz'beth; you can't! you can't!'

'Why can't I go out, I'd like to know? What do you mean, Em'ly Babcock?'

'You can't, you never can again. I stepped into some fire-crackers, an' I've burned some great holes right in the flouncin'. You can't never wear it without folks knowin'. Matilda Jennings will tell. Oh, 'Liz'beth, what will you do?'

'Do?' said Elizabeth. 'Well, I hope I ain't so set on goin' out at my time of life as all that comes to. Let's see it. H'm, I can mend that.'

'No, you can't. Matilda would see it if you did. Oh, dear! oh, dear!' Emily dropped into a corner and put her slim hands over her face.

'Do stop actin' so,' said her sister. 'I've jest had a letter, an' Aunt 'Liz'beth is dead.'

After a little Emily looked up. 'When did she die?' she asked, in a despairing voice.

'Last week.'

'Did they ask us to the funeral?'

'Of course they did; it was last Friday, at two o'clock in the afternoon. They knew the letter couldn't get to us till after the funeral; but of couse they'd ask us.'

'What did they say the matter was?'

'Old age, I guess, as much as anything. Aunt 'Liz'beth was a good deal over eighty.'

Emily sat reflectively; she seemed to be listening while her sister related more at length the contents of the letter. Suddenly she interrupted. ''Liz'beth.'

'Well?'

'I was thinkin', 'Liz'beth—you know those crape veils we wore when mother died?'

'Well, what of 'em?'

'I—don't see why—you couldn't—make a flounce of those veils, an' put on this dress when you wore it; then she wouldn't know.'

'I'd like to know what I'd wear a crape flounce for?'

'Why, mournin' for Aunt 'Liz'beth.'

'Em'ly Babcock, what sense would there be in my wearin' mournin' when you didn't?'

'You was named for her, an' it's a very diff'-rent thing. You can jest tell folks that you was named for your aunt that jest died, an' you felt as if you ought to wear a little crape on your best dress.'

'It'll be an awful job to put on a different flounce every time we wear it.'

'I'll do it; I'm perfectly willin' to do it. Oh, 'Liz'beth, I shall die if you ever go out again an' wear that dress.'

'For pity sakes, don't, Em'ly! I'll get out those veils after supper an' look at 'em.'

The next Sunday Elizabeth wore the black silk garnished with a crape flounce to church. Matilda Jennings walked home with her, and eyed the new trimming sharply. 'Got a new flounce, ain't you?' said she, finally.

'I had word last week that my aunt 'Liz'beth Taylor was dead, an' I thought it wa'n't anything more'n fittin' that I should put on a little crape,' replied Elizabeth, with dignity.

'Has Em'ly put on mournin', too?'

'Em'ly ain't any call to. She wa'n't named after her, as I was, an' she never saw her but once,

when she was a little girl. It ain't more'n ten years since I saw her. She lived out West. I didn't feel as if Em'ly had any call to wear crape.'

Matilda said no more, but there was unquelled suspicion in her eye as they parted at the Babcock gate.

The next week a trunk full of Aunt Elizabeth Taylor's clothes arrived from the West. Her daughter had sent them. There was in the trunk a goodly store of old woman's finery, two black silks among the other gowns. Aunt Elizabeth had been a dressy old lady, although she died in her eighties. It was a great surprise to the sisters. They had never dreamed of such a thing. They palpitated with awe and delight as they took out the treasures. Emily clutched Elizabeth, the thin hand closing around the thin arm.

''Liz'beth!'

'What is it?'

'We—won't say—anything about this to anybody. We'll jest go together to meetin' next Sabbath, an' wear these black silks, *an' let Matilda Jennings see.*'

Elizabeth looked at Emily. A gleam came into her dim blue eyes; she tightened her thin lips. '*Well, we will,*' said she.

The following Sunday the sisters wore the black silks to church. During the week they appeared together at a sewing meeting, then at church again. The wonder and curiosity were certainly not confined to Matilda Jennings. The eccentricity which the Babcock sisters displayed in not going into society together had long been a favourite topic in the town. There had been a great deal of speculation over it. Now that they had

appeared together three consecutive times, there was much talk.

On the Monday following the second Sunday Matilda Jennings went down to the Babcock house. Her cape-bonnet was on one-sided, but it was firmly tied. She opened the door softly, when her old muscles were straining forward to jerk the latch. She sat gently down in the proffered chair, and displayed quite openly a worn place over the knees in her calico gown.

'We had a pleasant Sabbath yesterday, didn't we?' said she.

'Real pleasant,' assented the sisters.

'I thought we had a good discourse.'

The Babcocks assented again.

'I heerd a good many say they thought it was a good discourse,' repeated Matilda, like an emphatic chorus. Then she suddenly leaned forward, and her face, in the depths of her awry bonnet, twisted into a benevolent smile. 'I was real glad to see you out together,' she whispered, with meaning emphasis.

The sisters smiled stiffly.

Matilda paused for a moment; she drew herself back, as if to gather strength for a thrust; she stopped smiling. 'I was glad to see you out together, for I thought it was too bad the way folks was talkin',' she said.

Elizabeth looked at her. 'How were they talkin'?'

'Well, I don't know as there's any harm in my tellin' you. I've been thinkin' mebbe I ought to for some time. It's been round consider'ble lately that you an' Em'ly didn't get along well, an' that was the reason you didn't go out more together. I told 'em I hadn't no idea 'twas so, though, of course,

I couldn't really tell. I was real glad to see you out together, 'cause there's never any knowin' how folks do get along, an' I was real glad to see you'd settled it if there had been any trouble.'

'There ain't been any trouble.'

'Well, I'm glad if there ain't been any, an' if there has, I'm glad to see it settled, an' I know other folks will be, too.'

Elizabeth stood up. 'If you want to know the reason why we haven't been out together, I'll tell you,' said she. 'You've been tryin' to find out things every way you could, an' now I'll tell you. You've drove me to it. We had jest one decent dress between us, an' Em'ly an' me took turns wearin' it, an' Em'ly used to wear lace on it, an' I used to rip off the lace an' sew on black velvet when I wore it, so folks shouldn't know it was the same dress. Em'ly an' me never had a word in our lives, an' it's a wicked lie for folks to say we have.'

Emily was softly weeping in her handkerchief; there was not a tear in Elizabeth's eyes; there were bright spots on her cheeks, and her slim height overhung Matilda Jennings imposingly.

'My Aunt 'Liz'beth, that I was named for, died two or three weeks ago,' she continued, 'an' they sent us a trunk full of her clothes, an' there was two decent dresses among 'em, an' that's the reason why Em'ly an' me have been out together sence. Now, Matilda Jennings, you have found out the whole story, an' I hope you're satisfied.'

Now that the detective instinct and the craving inquisitiveness which were so strong in this old woman were satisfied, she should have been more jubilant than she was. She had suspected what nobody else in town had suspected; she had verified

her suspicion, and discovered what the secrecy and pride of the sisters had concealed from the whole village, still she looked uneasy and subdued. 'I shan't tell anybody,' said she.

'You can tell anybody you're a mind to.'

'I shan't tell nobody.' Matilda Jennings arose; she had passed the parlour door, when she faced about. 'I s'pose I kinder begretched you that black silk,' said she, 'or I shouldn't have cared so much about findin' out. I never had black silk myself, nor any of my folks that I ever heard of. I ain't got nothin' decent to wear anyway.'

There was a moment's silence. 'We shan't lay up anything,' said Elizabeth then, and Emily sobbed responsively. Matilda passed on, and opened the outer door. Elizabeth whispered to her sister, and Emily nodded, eagerly. 'You tell her,' said she.

'Matilda,' called Elizabeth. Matilda looked back. 'I was jest goin' to say that, if you wouldn't resent it, it got burned some, but we mended it nice, that you was perfectly welcome to that—black silk. Em'ly an' me don't really need it, and we'd be glad to have you have it.'

There were tears in Matilda Jennings' black eyes, but she held them unwinkingly. 'Thank ye,' she said, in a gruff voice, and stepped along over the piazza down the steps. She reached Emily's flower garden. The peppery sweetness of the nasturtiums came up in her face; it was quite early in the day, and the portulacas were still out in a splendid field of crimson and yellow. Matilda turned about, her broad foot just cleared a yellow portulaca which had straggled into the path, but she did not notice it. The homely figure pushed past the flowers and into the house again. She

stood before Elizabeth and Emily. 'Look here,' said she, with a fine light struggling out of her coarse old face, 'I want to tell you—*I see them fire-crackers a-sizzlin' before Em'ly stepped in 'em.*'

A BLACKJACK BARGAINER

'O. HENRY' (WILLIAM SYDNEY PORTER)

William Sydney Porter, otherwise known as 'O. Henry' (1867-1910) was born in North Carolina, U. S. A. — the descendant of several governors of that state, it may be remarked in passing.

His education was that of the common school with the superposition of much study from life and a vast quantity of reading. Dr. C. Alphonso Smith, the authorized biographer of O. Henry, says that the strongest personal influence brought to bear on the boy during his first twenty years was that of his only teacher, who chanced to be also his aunt, Miss Evelina M. Porter. His mother had died when he was three years of age, and the devotion, intelligence and discipline of Miss Porter supplied the need of a mother's care.

He has stated that he read more between the ages of thirteen and nineteen than he did in all the years after, and that he read nothing but the classics. Burton's 'Anatomy of Melancholy' and 'The Arabian Nights' were his favourites. But also he read Scott, Dickens, Thackeray and other nineteenth century English novelists as well as the works of Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas. He affirmed that in Charles Reade's 'The Cloister and the Hearth' there was material for dozens of short stories. At the early age of seven or eight he had been gripped by the dime novel, or sensational fiction, and had learned to tell that type of story.

In his teens he entered his uncle's chemist's shop as clerk and there became an expert pharmacist. Constant confinement in the shop and much reading began to tell upon his health, and fearing his inheritance of consumption he went to Texas. For some time in Texas, Porter lived on a ranch. He was a cowboy for a little while, lassoing cattle, shearing sheep and 'busting bronchos.' But although

such Western pursuits were balanced by his study of French, German and Spanish, yet his real interest lay always in people and events. After two years on the ranch, he went in 1884, to Austin, the capital of Texas. There he was to remain more than ten years.

In January, 1891 he entered the First National Bank of Austin, still working at his writer's trade and establishing in April, 1894, the magazine 'Rolling Stone.' Though this publication lived only one year, the period was adequate to give him security in the opinion that writing was his calling. He resigned his position in December, 1894, and when the periodical died he went to Houston to accept a position on the *Daily Post*. That was in 1895, and he remained in Houston until June, 1896.

He was then called back to Austin to answer to a charge of embezzling funds while employed in the bank there. The charges were inconsistent, the management of the bank had always been notoriously loose, and Porter declared that he was innocent. But political enemies succeeded in getting him convicted and imprisoned. It was a bitter experience for him, and he felt the disgrace keenly. But it was out of this period of his life that some of his best stories came — stories of their lives that had been told him by his fellow-prisoners. 'The Gentle Grafter' was the book in which most of them appeared.

Next we see him in New Orleans, again embarked upon literary work. About eight years before his death he went to New York, in response to an offer from one of the magazine editors there. So it was that he settled down in the city he used affectionately to call, 'Little Old Bagdad by the Subway.' And here he entered into his inheritance, for his stories of New York gave him a secure place in literature. He used to 'walk at all hours of the day and night along the river front, through Hell's Kitchen, down the Bowery, dropping into all manner of places, and talking with any one who held converse.' He died in New York City, at the age of forty-two.

Of all short story writers 'O. Henry' mastered best the art of surprise. The sudden and often astounding reversals

at the end of his stories became delightfully characteristic, and the reader with the 'O. Henry' habit played a happy though always losing game with himself in trying to forecast the conclusion of each new story. No other writer ever made slang so really funny, yet few knew better the richness of serious English diction for really literary ends. Other short story writers have been as trenchant in wit, others as keen in observation, but none has known so wide a variety of common-folk as 'O. Henry.'

A critic says of him: '"O. Henry" has often been called "the Yankee Maupassant," and up to a certain point the characterisation is suggestive. His stories have the swiftness and point of the anecdote, as Maupassant's have. He employs just enough art to keep alive the reader's interest for the laugh or the gasp to which everything else leads up. ...As a humorist he was American to the finger tips. That is to say, he secured his effects by over-statement, which is the salient characteristic of American humour. ....Mark Twain was a world humorist; O. Henry was an American humorist.'

THE most disreputable thing in Yancey Goree's law office was Goree himself, sprawled in his creaky old arm-chair. The rickety little office, built of red brick, was set flush with the street — the main street of the town of Bethel.

Bethel rested upon the foot-hills of the Blue Ridge. Above it the mountains were piled to the sky. Far below it the turbid Catawba gleamed yellow along its disconsolate valley.

The June day was at its sultriest hour. Bethel dozed in the tepid shade. Trade was not. It was so still that Goree, reclining in his chair, distinctly heard the clicking of the chips in the grand-jury room, where the 'court-house gang' was playing poker. From the open back door of the office a

well-worn path meandered across the grassy lot to the court-house. The treading out of that path had cost Goree all he ever had — first inheritance of a few thousand dollars, next the old family home, and latterly the last shreds of his self-respect and manhood. The 'gang' had cleaned him out. The broken gambler had turned drunkard and parasite; he had lived to see this day come when the men who had stripped him denied him a seat at the game. His word was no longer to be taken. The daily bout at cards had arranged itself accordingly, and to him was assigned the ignoble part of the onlooker. The sheriff, the county clerk, a sportive deputy, a gay attorney, and a chalk-faced man hailing 'from the valley,' sat at table, and the sheared one was thus tacitly advised to go and grow more wool.

Soon wearying of his ostracism, Goree had departed for his office, muttering to himself as he unsteadily traversed the unlucky pathway. After a drink of corn whisky from a demijohn under the table, he had flung himself into the chair, staring, in a sort of maudlin apathy, out at the mountains immersed in the summer haze. The little white patch he saw away up on the side of Black-jack was Laurel, the village near which he had been born and bred. There, also, was the birth-place of the feud between the Gorees and the Coltranes. Now no direct heir of the Gorees survived except this plucked and singed bird of misfortune. To the Coltranes, also, but one male supporter was left — Colonel Abner Coltrane, a man of substance and standing, a member of the State Legislature, and a contemporary with Goree's father. The feud had been a typical one of the region; it had left a red record of hate, wrong and slaughter.

But Yancey Goree was not thinking of feuds. His befuddled brain was hopelessly attacking the problem of the future maintenance of himself and his favourite follies. Of late, old friends of the family had seen to it that he had whereof to eat and a place to sleep, but whisky they would not buy for him, and he must have whisky. His law business was extinct; no case had been entrusted to him in two years. He had been a borrower and a sponge, and it seemed that if he fell no lower it would be from lack of opportunity. One more chance—he was saying to himself—if he had one more stake at the game, he thought he could win; but he had nothing left to sell, and his credit was more than exhausted.

He could not help smiling, even in his misery, as he thought of the man to whom, six months before, he had sold the old Goree homestead. There had come from 'back yan'' in the mountains two of the strangest creatures, a man named Pike Garvey and his wife. 'Back yan',' with a wave of the hand toward the hills, was understood among the mountaineers to designate the remotest fastnesses, the unplumbed gorges, the haunts of lawbreakers, the wolf's den, and the boudoir of the bear. In the cabin far up on Blackjack's shoulder, in the wildest part of these retreats, this odd couple had lived for twenty years. They had neither dog nor children to mitigate the heavy silence of the hills. Pike Garvey was little known in the settlements, but all who had dealt with him pronounced him 'crazy as a loon.' He acknowledged no occupation save that of a squirrel hunter, but he 'moonshined' occasionally by way of diversion. Once the 'revenues' had dragged him from his lair, fighting silently and desperately like a terrier, and

he had been sent to state's prison for two years. Released, he popped back into his hole like an angry weasel.

Fortune, passing over many anxious wooers, made a freakish flight into Blackjack's bosky pockets to smile upon Pike and his faithful partner.

One day a party of spectacled, knickerbockered, and altogether absurd prospectors invaded the vicinity of the Garveys' cabin. Pike lifted his squirrel rifle off the hooks and took a shot at them at long range on the chance of their being revenues. Happily he missed, and the unconscious agents of good luck drew nearer, disclosing their innocence of anything resembling law or justice. Later on, they offered the Garveys an enormous quantity of ready, green, crisp money for their thirty-acre patch of cleared land, mentioning, as an excuse for such a mad action, some irrelevant and inadequate nonsense about a bed of mica underlying the said property.

When the Garveys became possessed of so many dollars that they faltered in computing them, the deficiencies of life on Blackjack began to grow prominent. Pike began to talk of new shoes, a hogshead of tobacco to set in the corner, a new lock to his rifle; and, leading Martella to a certain spot on the mountain-side, he pointed out to her how a small cannon—doubtless a thing not beyond the scope of their fortune in price—might be planted so as to command and defend the sole accessible trail to the cabin, to the confusion of revenues and meddling strangers forever.

But Adam reckoned without his Eve. These things represented to him the applied power of wealth, but there slumbered in his dingy cabin an ambition that soared far above his primitive wants.

Somewhere in Mrs. Garvey's bosom still survived a spot of femininity unstarved by twenty years of Blackjack. For so long a time the sounds in her ears had been the scaly-barks dropping in the woods at noon, and the wolves singing among the rocks at night, and it was enough to have purged her of vanities. She had grown fat and sad and yellow and dull. But when the means came, she felt a rekindled desire to assume the perquisites of her sex — to sit at tea tables; to buy inutile things; to whitewash the hideous veracity of life with a little form and ceremony. So she coldly vetoed Pike's proposed system of fortifications, and announced that they would descend upon the world, and gyrate socially.

And thus, at length, it was decided, and the thing done. The village of Laurel was their compromise between Mrs. Garvey's preference for one of the large valley towns and Pike's hankering for primeval solitudes. Laurel yielded a halting round of feeble social distractions comportable with Martella's ambitions, and was not entirely without recommendation to Pike, its contiguity to the mountains presenting advantages for sudden retreat in case fashionable society should make it advisable.

Their descent upon Laurel had been coincident with Yancey Goree's feverish desire to convert property into cash, and they bought the old Goree homestead, paying four thousand dollars ready money into the spendthrift's shaking hands.

Thus it happened that while the disreputable last of the Gorees sprawled in his disreputable office, at the end of his row, spurned by the cronies whom he had gorged, strangers dwelt in the halls of his fathers.

A cloud of dust was rolling slowly up the parched street, with something travelling in the midst of it. A little breeze wafted the cloud to one side, and a new, brightly painted carryall, drawn by a slothful gray horse, became visible. The vehicle deflected from the middle of the street as it neared Goree's office, and stopped in the gutter directly in front of his door.

On the front seat sat a gaunt, tall man, dressed in black broadcloth, his rigid hands incarcerated in yellow kid gloves. On the back seat was a lady who triumphed over the June heat. Her stout form was armoured in a skin-tight silk dress of the description known as 'changeable,' being a gorgeous combination of shifting hues. She sat erect, waving a much-ornamented fan, with her eyes fixed stonily far down the street. However Martella Garvey's heart might be rejoicing at the pleasures of her new life, Blackjack had done his work with her exterior. He had carved her countenance to the image of emptiness and inanity; had imbued her with the stolidity of his crags, and the reserve of his hushed interiors. She always seemed to hear, whatever her surroundings were, the scaly-barks falling and pattering down the mountainside. She could always hear the awful silence of Blackjack sounding through the stillest of nights.

Goree watched this solemn equipage, as it drove to his door, with only faint interest; but when the lank driver wrapped the reins about his whip, awkwardly descended, and stepped into the office, he rose unsteadily to receive him, recognizing Pike Garvey, the new, the transformed, the recently civilized.

The mountaineer took the chair Goree offered him. They who cast doubts upon Garvey's sound-

ness of mind had a strong witness in the man's countenance. His face was too long, a dull saffron in hue, and immobile as a statue's. Pale-blue, unwinking round eyes without lashes added to the singularity of his gruesome visage. Goree was at a loss to account for the visit.

'Everything all right at Laurel, Mr. Garvey?' he inquired.

'Everything all right, sir, and mighty pleased is Missis Garvey and me with the property. Missis Garvey likes yo' place, and she likes the neighbourhood. Society is what she 'lows she wants, and she is gettin' of it. The Rogerses, the Hapgoods, the Pratts, and the Troys hev been to see Missis Garvey, and she hev et meals to most of thar houses. The best folks hev axed her to differ'nt kinds of doin's. I cyan't say, Mr. Goree, that sech things suit me—fur me, give me them thar.' Garvey's huge, yellow-gloved hand flourished in the direction of the mountains. 'That's whar I b'long, 'mongst the wild honey bees and the b'ars. But that ain't what I come fur to say, Mr. Goree. Thar's somethin' you got what me and Missis Garvey wants to buy.'

'Buy!' echoed Goree. 'From me?' Then he laughed harshly. 'I reckon you are mistaken about that. I sold out to you, as you yourself expressed it, "lock, stock and barrel." There isn't even a ramrod left to sell.'

'You've got it, and we 'uns want it. "Take the money," says Missis Garvey, "and buy it fa'r and squar'."'

Goree shook his head. 'The cupboard's bare,' he said.

'We've riz,' pursued the mountaineer, undeflected from his object, 'a heap. We was pore

as possums, and now we could hev folks to dinner every day. We been reco'nized, Missis Garvey says, by the best society. But there's somethin' we need we ain't got. She says it ought to been put in the 'ventory ov the sale, but it tain't thar. "Take the money, then," says she, "and buy it fa'r and squar'." '

'Out with it,' said Goree, his racked nerves growing impatient.

Garvey threw his slouch hat upon the table, and leaned forward, fixing his unblinking eyes upon Goree's.

'There's a old fued,' he said distinctly and slowly, 'tween you'uns and the Coltranes.'

Goree frowned ominously. To speak of his feud to a feudist is a serious breach of the mountain etiquette. The man from 'back yan'' knew it as well as the lawyer did.

'Na offence,' he went on, 'but purely in the way of business. Missis Garvey hev studied all about feuds. Most of the quality folks in the mountains hev 'em. The Settles and the Goforths, the Rankins and the Boyds, the Silers and the Galloways, hev all been cyarin' on feuds f'om twenty to a hundred year. The last man to drap was when yo' uncle, Jedge Paisley Goree, 'journed co't and shot Len Coltrane f'om the bench. Missis Garvey and me, we come f'om the po' white trash. Nobody wouldn't pick a feud with we'uns, no mo'n with a family of tree-toads. Quality people everywhar, says Missis Garvey, has feuds. We'uns ain't quality, but we're buyin' into it as fur as we can. "Take the money, then," says Missis Garvey, "and buy Mr. Goree's feud, fa'r and squar'." '

The squirrel hunter straightened a leg half

across the room, drew a roll of bills from his pocket, and threw them on the table.

'Thar's two hundred dollars, Mr. Goree; what you would call a fa'r price for a feud that's been 'lowed to run down like yourn hev. Thar's only you left to cyar' on yo' side of it, and you'd make mighty po' killin'. I'll take it off yo' hands, and it'll set me and Missis Garvey up among the quality. Thar's the money.'

The little roll of currency on the table slowly untwisted itself, writhing and jumping as its folds relaxed. In the silence that followed Garvey's last speech the rattling of the poker chips in the court-house could be plainly heard. Goree knew that the sheriff had just won a pot, for the subdued whoop with which he always greeted a victory floated across the square upon the crinkly heat waves. Beads of moisture stood on Goree's brow. Stooping, he drew the wicker-covered demijohn from under the table, and filled a tumbler from it.

'A little corn liquor, Mr. Garvey? Of course you are joking about—what you spoke of? Opens quite a new market, doesn't it? Feuds, prime, two-fifty to three. Feuds, slightly damaged—two hundred, I believe you said, Mr. Garvey?'

Goree laughed self-consciously.

The mountaineer took the glass Goree handed him, and drank the whisky without a tremor of the lids of his staring eyes. The lawyer applauded the feat by a look of envious admiration. He poured his own drink, and took it like a drunkard, by gulps, and with shudders at the smell and taste.

'Two hundred,' repeated Garvey. 'Thar's the money.'

A sudden passion flared up in Goree's brain. He struck the table with his fist. One of the bills

flipped over and touched his hand. He flinched as if something had stung him.

'Do you come to me,' he shouted, 'seriously with such a ridiculous, insulting, darned-fool proposition?'

'It's fa'r and squar',' said the squirrel hunter, but he reached out his hand as if to take back the money; and then Goree knew that his own flurry of rage had not been from pride or resentment, but from anger at himself, knowing that he would set foot in the deeper depths that were being opened to him. He turned in an instant from an outraged gentleman to an anxious chafferer recommending his goods.

'Don't be in a hurry, Garvey,' he said, his face crimson and his speech thick. 'I accept your p-p-proposition, though it's dirt cheap at two hundred. A t-trade's all right when both p-purchaser and b-buyer are s-satisfied. Shall I wrap it up for you, Mr. Garvey?'

Garvey rose, and shook out his broadcloth. 'Missis Garvey will be pleased. You air out of it, and it stands Coltrane and Garvey. Just a scrap ov writin', Mr. Goree, you bein' a lawyer, to show we traded.'

Goree seized a sheet of paper and a pen. The money was clutched in his moist hand. Everything else suddenly seemed to grow trivial and light.

'Bill of sale, by all means. "Right, title and interest in and to" . . . "forever warrant and—" No, Garvey, we'll have to leave out that "defend,"' said Goree with a loud laugh. 'You'll have to defend this title yourself.'

The mountaineer received the amazing screed that the lawyer handed him, folded it with immense labour, and placed it carefully in his pocket.

Goree was standing near the window. 'Step here,' he said, raising his finger, 'and I'll show you your recently purchased enemy. There he goes, down the other side of the street.'

The mountaineer crooked his long frame to look through the window in the direction indicated by the other. Colonel Abner Coltrane, an erect, portly gentleman of about fifty, wearing the inevitable long, double-breasted frock coat of the Southern law-maker, and an old high silk hat, was passing on the opposite sidewalk. As Garvey looked, Goree glanced at his face. If there be such a thing as a yellow wolf, here was its counterpart. Garvey snarled as his unhuman eyes followed the moving figure, disclosing long, amber-coloured fangs.

'Is that him? Why, that's the man who sent me to the pen'tentiary once!'

'He used to be district attorney,' said Goree carelessly. 'And, by the way, he's a first-class shot.'

'I kin hit a squirrel's eye at a hundred yards,' said Garvey. 'So that's that Coltrane! I made a better trade than I was thinkin.' I'll take keer ov this feud, Mr. Goree, better'n you ever did!'

He moved towards the door, but lingered there, betraying a slight perplexity.

'Anything else to-day?' inquired Goree with frothy sarcasm. 'Any family traditions, ancestral ghosts, or skeletons in the closet? Prices as low as the lowest.'

'Thar was another thing,' replied the unmoved squirrel hunter, 'that Missis Garvey was thinkin' of. 'Tain't so much in my line as t'other, but she wanted partic'lar that I should inquire, and ef you was willin,' "pay fur it," she says, "fa'r and squar'." Thar's a buryin' groun', as you know

Mr. Goree, in the yard of yo' old place, under the cedars. Them that lies thar is yo' folks what was killed by the Coltranes. The monyments has the names on 'em. Missis Garvey says a fam'ly buryin' groun' is a sho' sign of quality. She says ef we git the feud, thar's somethin' else ought to go with it. The names on them monyments is "Goree," but they can be changed to ourn by —'

'Go! Go!' screamed Goree, his face turning purple. He stretched out both hands toward the mountaineer, his fingers hooked and shaking. 'Go, you ghoul! Even a Ch-Chinaman protects the g-graves of his ancestors — go!'

The squirrel hunter slouched out of the door to his carryall. While he was climbing over the wheel Goree was collecting, with feverish celerity, the money that had fallen from his hand to the floor. As the vehicle slowly turned about, the sheep, with a coat of newly grown wool, was hurrying, in indecent haste, along the path to the courthouse.

At three o'clock in the morning they brought him back to his office, shorn and unconscious. The sheriff, the sportive deputy, the county clerk, and the gay attorney carried him, the chalk-faced man 'from the valley' acting as escort.

'On the table,' said one of them, and they deposited him there among the litter of his unprofitable books and papers.

'Yance thinks a lot of a pair of deuces when he's liquored up,' sighed the sheriff reflectively.

'Too much,' said the gay attorney. 'A man has no business to play poker who drinks as much as he does. I wonder how much he dropped tonight.'

'Close to two hundred. What I wonder is whar he got it. Yance ain't had a cent fur over a month, I know.'

'Struck a client, maybe. Well, let's get home before daylight. He'll be all right when he wakes up, except for a sort of beehive about the cranium.'

The gang slipped away through the early morning twilight. The next eye to gaze upon the miserable Goree was the orb of day. He peered through the uncurtained window, first deluging the sleeper in a flood of faint gold, but soon pouring upon the mottle red of his flesh a searching, white, summer heat. Goree stirred, half unconsciously, among the table's debris, and turned his face from the window. His movement dislodged a heavy law book, which crashed upon the floor. Opening his eyes, he saw, bending over him, a man in a well-worn silk hat, and beneath it the kindly, smooth face of Colonel Abner Coltrane.

A little uncertain of the outcome, the colonel waited for the other to make some sign of recognition. Not in twenty years had male members of these two families faced each other in peace. Goree's eyelids puckered as he strained his blurred sight toward this visitor, and then he smiled serenely.

'Have you brought Stella and Lucy over to play?' he said calmly.

'Do you know me, Yancey?' asked Coltrane.

'Of course I do. You brought me a whip with a whistle in the end.'

So he had—twenty-four years ago; when Yancey's father was his best friend.

Goree's eyes wandered about the room. The colonel understood. 'Lie still, and I'll bring you some,' said he. There was a pump in the yard at

the rear, and Goree closed his eyes, listening with rapture to the click of its handle, and the bubbling of the falling stream. Coltrane brought a pitcher of the cool water, and held it for him to drink. Presently Goree sat up — a most forlorn object, his summer suit of flax soiled and crumpled, his discreditable head tousled and unsteady. He tried to wave one of his hands toward the colonel.

'Ex-excuse — everything, will you?' he said. 'I must have drunk too much whisky last night, and gone to bed on the table.' His brows knitted into a puzzled frown.

'Out with the boys a while?' asked Coltrane kindly.

'No, I went nowhere. I haven't had a dollar to spend in the last two months. Struck the demijohn too often, I reckon, as usual.'

Colonel Coltrane touched him on the shoulder.

'A little while ago, Yancey,' he began, 'you asked me if I had brought Stella and Lucy over to play. You weren't quite awake then, and must have been dreaming you were a boy again. You are awake now, and I want you to listen to me. I have come from Stella and Lucy to their old playmate, and to my old friend's son. They know that I am going to bring you home with me, and you will find them as ready with a welcome as they were in the old days. I want you to come to my house and stay until you are yourself again, and as much longer as you will. We heard of your being down in the world, and in the midst of temptation, and we agreed that you should come over and play at our house once more. Will you come, my boy? Will you drop our old family trouble and come with me?'

'Trouble!' said Goree, opening his eyes wide. 'There was never any trouble between us that I know of. I'm sure we've always been the best of friends. But, good Lord, Colonel, how could I go to your home as I am—a drunken wretch, a miserable, degraded spendthrift and gambler—'

He lurched from the table into his armchair, and began to weep maudlin tears, mingled with genuine drops of remorse and shame. Coltrane talked to him persistently and reasonably, reminding him of the simple mountain pleasures of which he had once been so fond, and insisting upon the genuineness of the invitation.

Finally he landed Goree by telling him he was counting upon his help in the engineering and transportation of a large amount of felled timber from a high mountainside to a waterway. He knew that Goree had once invented a device for this purpose—a series of slides and chutes—upon which he had justly prided himself. In an instant the poor fellow, delighted at the idea of his being of use to anyone, had paper spread upon the table, and was drawing rapid but pitifully shaky lines in demonstration of what he could and would do.

The man was sickened of the husks; his prodigal heart was turning again toward the mountains. His mind was yet strangely clogged, and his thoughts and memories were returning to his brain one by one, like carrier pigeons over a stormy sea. But Coltrane was satisfied with the progress he had made.

Bethel received the surprise of its existence that afternoon when a Coltrane and a Goree rode amicably together through the town. Side by side they rode, out from the dusty streets and gaping

townspeople, down across the creek bridge, and up toward the mountain. The prodigal had brushed and washed and combed himself to a more decent figure, but he was unsteady in the saddle, and he seemed to be deep in the contemplation of some vexing problem. Coltrane left him in his mood, relying upon the influence of changed surroundings to restore his equilibrium.

Once Goree was seized with a shaking fit, and almost came to a collapse. He had to dismount and rest at the side of the road. The colonel, foreseeing such a condition, had provided a small flask of whisky for the journey but when it was offered to him Goree refused it almost with violence, declaring he would never touch it again. By and by he was recovered, and went quietly enough for a mile or two. Then he pulled up his horse suddenly, and said,

'I lost two hundred dollars last night, playing poker. Now, where did I get that money?'

'Take it easy, Yancey. The mountain air will soon clear it up. We'll go fishing, first thing, at the Pinnacle Falls. The trout are jumping there like bullfrogs. We'll take Stella and Lucy along, and have a picnic on Eagle Rock. Have you forgotten how a hickory-cured-ham sandwich tastes, Yancey, to a hungry fisherman?'

Evidently the colonel did not believe the story of his lost wealth; so Goree retired again into brooding silence.

By late afternoon they had travelled ten of the twelve miles between Bethel and Laurel. Half a mile this side of Laurel lay the old Goree place; a mile or two beyond the village lived the Coltranes. The road was now steep and laborious, but the compensations were many. The tilted aisles of

the forest were opulent with leaf and bird and bloom. The tonic air put to shame the pharmacopœia. The glades were dark with mossy shade, and bright with shy rivulets winking from the fern and laurels. On the lower side they viewed, framed in the near foliage, exquisite sketches of the far valley swooning in its opal haze.

Coltrane was pleased to see that his companion was yielding to the spell of the hills and woods. For now they had but to skirt the base of Painter's Cliff; to cross Elder Branch and mount the hill beyond, and Goree would have to face the squandered home of his fathers. Every rock he passed, every tree, every foot of the road-way, was familiar to him. Though he had forgotten the woods, they thrilled him like the music of 'Home, Sweet Home.'

They rounded the cliff, descended into Elder Branch, and paused there to let the horses drink and plash in the swift water. On the right was a rail fence that cornered there, and followed the road and stream. Inclosed by it was the old apple orchard of the home place; the house was yet concealed by the brow of the steep hill. Inside and along the fence, pokeberries, elders, sassafras, and sumac grew high and dense. At a rustle of their branches, both Goree and Coltrane glanced up, and saw a long, yellow, wolfish face above the fence, staring at them with pale, unwinking eyes. The head quickly disappeared; there was a violent swaying of the bushes, and an ungainly, figure ran up through the apple orchard in the direction of the house, zigzagging among the trees.

'That's Garvey,' said Coltrane; 'the man you sold out to. There's no doubt but he's considerably cracked. I had to send him up for moonshining

once, several years ago, in spite of the fact that I believed him irresponsible. Why, what's the matter, Yancey?'

Goree was wiping his forehead, and his face had lost its colour. 'Do I look queer, too?' he asked, trying to smile. 'I'm just remembering a few more things.' Some of the alcohol had evaporated from his brain. 'I recollect now where I got that two hundred dollars.'

'Don't think of it,' said Coltrane cheerfully. 'Later on we'll figure it all out together.'

They rode out of the Branch, and when they reached the foot of the hill Goree stopped again.

'Did you ever suspect I was a very vain kind of fellow, Colonel?' he asked. 'Sort of foolish proud about appearances?'

The colonel's eyes refused to wander to the soiled, sagging suit of flax and the faded slouch hat.

'It seems to me,' he replied, mystified, but humouring him, 'I remember a young buck about twenty, with the tightest coat, the sleekest hair, and the prancingest saddle horse in the Blue Ridge.'

'Right you are,' said Goree eagerly. 'And it's in me yet, though it don't show. Oh, I'm as vain as a turkey gobbler, and as proud as Lucifer. I'm going to ask you to indulge this weakness of mine in a little matter.'

'Speak out, Yancey. We'll create you Duke of Laurel and Baron of Blue Ridge, if you choose; and you shall have a feather out of Stella's peacock's tail to wear in your hat.'

'I'm in earnest. In a few minutes we'll pass the house up there on the hill where I was born, and where my people have lived for nearly a century. Strangers live there now—and look at me! I am about to show myself to them ragged and

poverty-stricken, a wastrel and a beggar. Colonel Coltrane, I'm ashamed to do it. I want you to let me wear your coat and hat until we are out of sight beyond. I know you think it a foolish pride, but I want to make as good a showing as I can when I pass the old place.'

'Now, what does this mean?' said Coltrane to himself, as he compared his companion's sane looks and quiet demeanour with his strange request. But he was already unbuttoning the coat, assenting readily, as if the fancy were in no wise to be considered strange.

The coat and hat fitted Goree well. He buttoned the former about him with a look of satisfaction and dignity. He and Coltrane were nearly the same size—rather tall, portly, and erect. Twenty-five years were between them, but in appearance they might have been brothers. Goree looked older than his age; his face was puffy and lined; the colonel had the smooth, fresh complexion of a temperate liver. He put on Goree's disreputable old flax coat and faded slouch hat.

'Now,' said Goree, taking up the reins, 'I'm all right. I want you to ride about ten feet in the rear as we go by, Colonel, so that they can get a good look at me. They'll see I'm no back number yet, by any means. I guess I'll show up pretty well to them once more, anyhow. Let's ride on.'

He set out up the hill at a smart trot, the colonel following, as he had been requested.

Goree sat straight in the saddle, with head erect, but his eyes were turned to the right, sharply scanning every shrub and fence and hiding-place in the old homestead yard. Once he muttered to

himself, 'Will the crazy fool try it, or did I dream half of it?'

It was when he came opposite the family burying ground that he saw what he had been looking for — a puff of white smoke, coming from the thick cedars in one corner. He toppled so slowly to the left that Coltrane had time to urge his horse to that side, and catch him with one arm.

The squirrel hunter had not overpraised his aim. He had sent the bullet where he intended, and where Goree had expected that it would pass—through the breast of Colonel Abner Coltrane's black frock coat.

Goree leaned heavily against Coltrane, but he did not fall. The horses kept pace, side by side, and the colonel's arm kept him steady. The little white houses of Laurel shone through the trees, half a mile away. Goree reached out one hand and groped until it rested upon Coltrane's fingers which held his bridle.

'Good friend,' he said, and that was all.

Thus did Yancey Goree, as he rode past his old home, make, considering all things, the best showing that was in his power.

THE COMFORTER

BY ELIZABETH JORDAN

Elizabeth Jordan (1867-   ) was born in Wisconsin, U. S. A. In her early years she gave promise of authorship, a promise interestingly reflected in 'I Write a Play' and 'Olive's First Story.' She was graduated at the Convent ot Notre Dame, Milwaukee, having suffered and enjoyed a number of experiences which she later utilized in 'May Iverson — Her Book'.

Having gone to New York about the age of twenty, Miss Jordan joined the editorial staff of the *World*. There for thirteen years she served her apprenticeship to letters. This period was one of preparation for her best literary work. In it she learned the art and the business of writing.

In 1900 she accepted the editorship of *Harper's Bazaar*, a position she filled with eminent success. Later she became connected with a Motion Picture Company, as adviser and editor.

Miss Jordan numbers among her friends men, women and children of many classes and types. One of the literary coterie of New York, she occupies herself with professional and social activities. At the same time, she is never too busy to encourage an ambitious young woman or to warn her of the difficulties in the road to success.

The work of an author is a direct outgrowth of experience. The best story-teller gathers material out of his own life and the environments he has known, and in his work faithfully reflects the changes of time and place. This is particularly true of Miss Jordan. Her first volume of stories to be widely received was 'May Iverson — Her Book.' Published in 1904, it still remains in general opinion her leading work. The sequels, 'May Iverson Tackles Life,' and 'May Iverson's Career,' containing stories of the same excellent technique, are preferred by

some readers. The collection, 'Tales of the City-Room' (1898) consists of stories growing out of her early journalistic career. The group in 'Tales of Destiny,' illustrated in such a narrative as 'The Voice in the World of Pain,' bears witness to the author's extended spiritual development and to her interest in the psychic. 'Lovers' Knots,' published in 1916, testifies to her sure lightness of touch in handling the more superficial aspects of the social world.

This writer also found time to produce a drama, 'The Lady from Oklahoma', produced in 1911.

Her range is wide, as her life has been filled with varied incidents. But whether her locale is the convent or the city-room or a chateau in France she displays always the ability to see her story, to tell it clearly, and with a directness which brooks no turning aside in delivering the narrative. She is possessed of a rich humour, which leavens most of her writing.

IT HAD been a very slight operation, under gas—so slight that an hour after I returned to consciousness my sole reminders of the experience were an impressive wad of cotton in my left ear, a pain and buzzing sensation in the same organ, and an acute sense of having been abused and of needing sympathy.

No sympathy, however, was offered me. The doctors were gone, the nurse had temporarily disappeared, and there was nothing more responsive in sight than the four severely hygienic walls of my private room at the hospital. Various pieces of oddly shaped apparatus for ear treatment, with which, during later hours, I was to have intimate and unpleasant association, hung from white-painted iron rods near the bed. A small, glass-topped table was beside my pillow. Within reach were

electric-light switches and bell-buttons; but where was the touch of the human hand, the brooding solicitude of the human heart, to which, by every right, I felt myself entitled? My sense of injury deepened and I pushed a button; but if I had looked for comfort from the nurse who responded, one glance at that remote being taught me that I looked in vain.

'Is there anything you want?' she asked coldly.

'No-o-o,' I admitted, with regret, after a vain attempt to think of some excuse for having called her to my side.

She raised her eyebrows, smoothed my pillow professionally, laid a perfunctory finger on my pulse, and finally, after shaking a clinical thermometer, tucked it into my mouth. Having shown me these attentions, she sank into a reverie in which it was clear that my affairs had no part. A minute or two later she remembered me, removed the thermometer, and bestowed a casual glance upon it.

'Normal,' she observed, briefly, and started toward the door. I checked her in her flight.

'I thought,' I remarked, hopefully, 'that perhaps *you* could think of some delicate attention I need.'

She laughed. 'You don't need anything,' she remarked, callously. 'You'll be out of here in four days.' Then, softening a little, she added: 'But I know what's the matter with you. You're lonesome.'

'Perhaps that's it,' I sighed. 'I knew there was something. It's a horrible sensation, and of course it couldn't have anything to do with the excavations you people have been making in my ear-drum.'

She studied me in silence for an instant; then, with dawning interest, pressed the bone behind my ear.

'Any pain there?' she asked.

'No,' I admitted, 'not yet. But I'm sure there will be, the next time you inquire. It's what all the doctors are looking for; and after I've brooded over it a few hours more, I'll have it.'

'Nonsense!' she said, briskly. 'I'm going to order your supper. What would you like? Tea or chocolate?'

I waved away the sordid topic. 'If this thing develops into mastoiditis,' I remarked, 'or cerebro-spinal meningitis, please tell my family not to feel any remorse over neglecting me in my last hours—'

'Imaginative,' she murmured, as if to herself. 'Needs diversion.' Then to me: 'There *is* something you need. You need the Comforter. Wait, and I'll send it to you.'

She was gone, and I waited, perforce. The Comforter? It sounded serious, but interesting. What was it? Obviously not bed-clothing, for it was an April evening, and I was already well supplied with that. I set my imagination to work, and found it vacillating between the claims of a hot-water bottle and a religious picture. Whatever it was, I reflected bitterly, they'd better send it soon, before it was too late. The pain in my ear was growing worse. If I died, the corridors would be filled with stricken souls, and a procession of automobiles containing weeping friends would extend from the hospital to Harlem. But when I was merely half dead and wholly miserable nobody cared. I touched the bone behind my ear and decided that it was growing sensitive. It might well be, for I had been pressing it at close intervals

since I returned to consciousness; but I did not stop to think of that, for by this time I was mentally selecting my pall bearers.

I had just decided that the incurably optimistic expression of my best man friend unfitted him for the sad occasion, when I heard a soft tap, followed by the opening of my door, around which a head promptly appeared, covered with short yellow curls. A pair of brown eyes looked at me, and two rows of tiny, white teeth flashed in an adorable smile. The next instant the door closed, and a small boy about five years old stood with his back against it, regarding me with shy hesitation, as if to make sure that I was awake and in a hospitable mood. He looked like a study in blue and gold as he posed there, outlined against the white woodwork; for below his yellow curls he wore blue rompers, blue socks stopped half-way up his chubby legs, and a yellow rose was pinned ostentatiously upon his breast. On his feet were slippers with straps over the instep, and as he felt my eye resting on him he slowly drew the top of one slipper back and forth on the floor, as if following some invisible design.

'How do you do?' I asked, when the silence was becoming oppressive. 'Won't you come nearer and sit down?'

The invitation seemed to be what he was waiting for. With the assured step of one now certain of his welcome, he came toward me, climbed upon a chair near the bed, and sat facing me, his short legs straight out in front of him, his brown eyes turned upon me with warm interest in their clear depths, a big dimple appearing and disappearing in his left cheek.

'How do you feel?' he inquired.

'Why, I—I think I feel much better, thank you,' I assured him, with conviction in my tone. For it was true. The suddenness of his appearance, the charm of his personality, and the beauty of the picture he made as he sat before me diverted and delighted me.

He nodded. 'Miss Smiff said you would,' he corroborated. 'Miss Smiff said, "Go and see the lady in 14, an' she will feel better." So I came.'

'That was very good of you,' I observed, gratefully, staring at him with growing interest. So this was the Comforter. He looked the part. It was growing dark, but all the light in the dim room seemed to focus on his yellow curls, with the effect of a soft halo.

'I live here,' he explained, simply. 'I live here all the time. I don't get lonesome. Some folks get lonesome. Then they cwy. Then I comes an' talk to them. That makes them feel better wight off,' he added, modestly, crossing his hands over his plump little stomach with a capable air which was irresistible, and for which, I subsequently learned, the head nurse had been his unconscious model.

'Children cwy lots,' he went on. 'Sometimes when they have their eyes bandaged I hold their hands. Then they don't get fwightened in the dark. It's awful dark when your eyes is bandaged,' he continued, settling in his chair as if for a long chat. 'Some boys see lions an' tigers then, an' snakes an'—an' el'phan's.' He paused a moment, and regarded me anxiously as this last word fell from his lips. Observing that I received it with quiet respect, he continued, with growing assurance:

'But when I hold their hands they just see engines an' turkey an' birthday cakes an' fishes in

the water an'—an' nice things. An' we talk about them.'

'That's capital,' I said. 'They must be very glad indeed to have you hold their hands.'

He smiled. It was obvious that he was used to approval, as well he might be. The pain in my ear felt better; in fact, I had almost forgotten it.

'A little boy is in there.' He indicated a room next to mine. 'He's seven. His name is Willie Maxwell. He was awful sick. He's got mas—mas—' He struggled an instant with the word, then abandoned the effort to produce it, and hurried on. 'He's got it,' he added, 'an' it hurts. His mother's wif him now, so he don't need me, an' he's better. One day we let the phonograph play evewyfing it knew for him, 'cos it hurt.'

I congratulated myself warmly upon the fact that my little neighbour was past the need of this particular alleviation of his suffering—a phonogragh playing everything it knew in the next room was not, I felt sure, the solace that my injured ear required, whatever it might have done for Willie Maxwell. Then it occured to me that I was allowing the burden of the present entertainment to rest entirely on my small guest. He had stopped talking, but sat before me wholly at his ease, his brown eyes touching other objects in the room from time to time, but always returning to my face. His hands lay folded in his lap. The rose on his breast rose and fell with his quiet breathing. From the top of his curly head to the sandals on his crossed feet he presented a soul-satisfying picture of the ideal visitor to a sick-room. Moreover, he had not asked once whether I felt a sharp pain behind my ear.

In return for all this, what could I do for him? I had as yet no flowers to give him, no picture-books to show him.

'Do you like stories?' I asked him. He made one ecstatic bounce in his chair; then, remembering where he was, quieted down again and merely looked at me with shining eyes.

'Oh-h-h!' he cried, softly. 'You bet I do.'

Even as the words fell from his innocent lips he stopped, his face flushing, and hung his head.

'I mean I do,' he added, much abashed. 'I'm not 'lowed to say "you bet," but sometimes it slips out. Do you know stowies? Can you tell any?'

'I know so many stories,' I assured him, solemnly, 'that if I began now and told you a story every day you might be a big man with whiskers before I got through.'

He leaned forward in his chair, drawing a long breath. 'Oh-h-h!' he said again, and there was eloquence in the word. 'Will you tell me one, please? Right straight off, 'thout waiting? 'Cause I can only stay till supper, an' it's 'most supper now. An' after supper,' he added, with poignant regret, 'I always have to go to bed.'

I began with Jack the Giant-killer, to which he listened with breathless attention, interspersed by delighted gasps and gurgles at exciting crises in the tale. When I finished, he was on the extreme edge of his chair, holding to it with both hands, and pale with excitement; but he recalled himself sternly to the present, and, unpinning his flower, held it out to me.

'I'm going to give you my wose,' he said, firmly.

I hesitated.

'Please take it,' he begged. 'Take the pin, too, 'cause you haven't got any.'

I thanked him warmly and pinned the flower to my nightgown, feeling like a prima donna receiving floral tributes as a reward for her art. My audience followed the operation with respectful attention.

'Can you tell one single 'nother stowy before I have to go?' he asked, after it was concluded. And he added, his head to one side, his smile shy and deprecating, 'Just a *little* one?'

I told him the stories of Hop-o'-My-Thumb and Red Riding-Hood, and finally, deciding that he needed something less exciting than these strenuous episodes, the old Andersen story of the little gray-eyed mermaid who came to play with the land child. Toward the end of this he was so quiet that I knew he had fallen asleep. I went on talking, however, afraid that if I stopped he would wake, and using the opportunity to observe him more closely than I had yet done. As I studied him my heart sank, for I was beginning to realize why he 'lived' at the hospital. His long lashes lay on cheeks which seemed waxen in the fading light, and his little legs, though plump, had the same odd pallor. Moreover, there were unchildish lines in his face when he was in repose — lines evidently etched there by pain.

Miss Smith came back while my heroine was vainly searching the shores of the Baltic for the playmate who would never return. For an instant she stood at the door, looking at the tableau we presented, her cold face softening wonderfully. Then, uttering an inarticulate note of tenderness, she came to us and bent over the Comforter.

'He's asleep,' she cooed, and I would not have known her voice. 'Bless his little heart! Isn't he the sweetest thing you ever saw in your life?'

She knelt before him and gathered him into her arms, kissing the eyes he opened drowsily.

'Time for supper, Harry,' she murmured, 'and for bed. Wake up. Say good-night to your new friend, and then I'll take you to your own room.'

The Comforter sighed, smiled, buried his yellow head in her neck for a moment, in delicate intimation that he did not care to be disturbed, and finally, as she continued to urge him, aroused himself and got down wearily from his chair.

'Good-night,' he said, turning a sleepy smile on me. 'Thank you for the stowies.' He put out his hand, which I held for an instant.

'Good-night, Harry,' I said. 'Thank you for coming to comfort me.'

'I'll come often,' promised Harry, drowsily, as 'Miss Smiff' bore him away.

The door closed behind them, then re-opened, and Harry's bobbing curls appeared again. 'They were *nice* stowies,' he said, and after this final tribute he departed for the night.

'Miss Smiff' returned in a few minutes, and subsequent proceedings in the sick-room seemed more interesting to her than to me. As she directed a stream of very hot water into my ear she sought to divert my mind by chatting about the Comforter. I learned that he had been in the hospital three years, coming originally as a charity patient from a reeking, poverty-stricken tenement. His disease was a rare one, with a long medical name, new and meaningless to me. He needed special care and

treatment, such as he could not receive in the home of the aunt who had taken him in when he was orphaned, and who had five children of her own. So the hospital people had kept him, Miss Smith explained, and he had become the idol of doctors and nurses. His language, which did not suggest a tenement influence, they had taught him. I gathered that their own had improved in the process, that the use of slang and careless speech in his hearing was forbidden, and that Harry had also benefited by frequent and intimate association with the better class of patients.

'His aunt was glad to be relieved of the responsibility of him,' Miss Smith added. 'But we cast our bread on the waters when we took him in. He's the joy of our lives and of this hospital. He does more for the patients than any of us. But — we can't save him.'

'Can't save him?' I found myself repeating her words stupidly.

'He was doomed when he came into the world. It's a matter of months now,' she added, and her cold eyes filled.

'Does he suffer?' I hardly dared ask the question.

'Only during acute attacks. He's very well and happy the rest of the time. His little nursery is full of toys the doctors bring him. We nurses buy his clothes, his rompers and sandals and underwear and stockings. He has four times as much as he needs, because every time one of us sees anything for a little boy — ' She stopped suddenly and busied herself with the apparatus, keeping her back toward me.

'He's the most useful member of the staff,' she continued, after a long silence. 'He can do

more with the children, of course, than any of us. In an eye-and-ear-and-throat hospital there is much done that frightens children. But Harry can always quiet them. You'll think it's because we all adore him that we consider him so wonderful. But wait till you know him better.'

I knew him better very soon. Early the next morning, when my breakfast-tray had been removed and the nurse's duties attended to, my door opened very slowly and quietly, after a little tap on its outer panel, and the Comforter entered again. He was in pink this time — pink rompers and short pink stockings — and a pink rose lay upon his breast. The colour gave him a little colour of his own. For the ceremony which followed I was not prepared. He strode to the bedside with his chest expanded and a pompous step, took a toy watch out of his breast pocket, held it in his left hand, and kept his eyes fastened solemnly upon it while he laid the fingers of his right hand upon my pulse. Then he nodded slowly, his bobbing curls lending emphasis to his approval.

'You'll do,' he said, briskly; 'feeling all right, eh?' And restoring his watch to his pocket, he looked at me with an expansive grin which revealed both his upper and lower teeth.

The episode was such a flawless imitation of the early morning visit of the house surgeon that I was inwardly convulsed; but Miss Smith, who had entered in time to witness the end of the scene, shook her head at me so warningly that I dared not laugh. Later she explained to me that Harry could imitate with equal fidelity every doctor and nurse in the hospital, but that no attention was ever paid to this rather questionable

talent, so the child remained serenely unconscious of anything amusing in his frequent impersonations.

'I was going to give you my wose,' Harry remarked at the conclusion of his 'examination.' 'But you've got some of your vewy own, haven't you? You've got lots.'

He came to my table and stood still before it, his brown eyes fixed on the great masses of roses the nurse had just arranged. Suddenly he was all child again.

'May I smell some of them?' he asked, eagerly. 'May I put my nose right *on* them?'

I lifted the pitcher and vases in turn and held them before him while he buried his face in the flowers and stood very still, inhaling deeply.

'Sometimes woses come out of dirt, in pots,' he observed, after he was perched on his chair. 'But most times they live in water. Willie's got f'owers this morning, too,' he went on, after I had acknowledged his botanical information. 'An' Mrs. Gwey's got some down on the other side of the hall. Willie has pink woses, an' Mrs. Gwey's got wed ones. You've got white ones, too, haven't you?'

'Yes,' I said. 'I like white roses best. These are the kind that grow in pots. I like those that grow in the country, and smell sweeter than any others.'

'What's the countwy?'

I explained, and in a few moments more found myself deep in a description of a beloved old farm I had often visited. He listened in ecstatic silence, his brown eyes never leaving my face. Then, in his turn, he told me of his hospital life, his toys and friends, his favourite doctors and nurses. They all seemed to be his favourites.

He spent, it seemed, much of his time in the wing which contained private rooms, and incidentally his own nursery. Every afternoon he took a long nap. But it was plain that any frightened child anywhere in the great building could have the Comforter in his hour of need; and twice a day, morning and afternoon, he went through the free wards, stopping at the different beds to chat with and cheer children and grown-ups alike. It was a strange life for a child, I reflected. But what it had made of him — a man, at times, in tact and understanding, with the joyousness and simplicity of the child.

'I've never been in a boat,' he said, suddenly. 'And I've never been to the 'Quarimum. But some day I'm going.'

'The 'Quarimum?' I said, thoughtlessly.

'Yes. Where the fishes all are. They swim wound the glass places, an' you see them.'

'Oh yes, the Aquarium. I'll take you for a boat-ride sometime, if you like, when I get well,' I promised, 'and to the Aquarium, too.'

'Oh-h-h, *will* you? When?'

'Next week. Do you know when that is?'

He sighed. 'It sounds a long way off. How many times do I go to bed before then?'

I reflected. The doctors had said I could leave in three days more.

'Only four times,' I said. I took his small hand and emphasized the count on his fingers. 'This time, and this time, and this time, and this time. Then we go.'

He drew a breath of deep content. 'It's soon,' he said.

We were deep in the discussion of this delight when 'Miss Smiff' came to take the Comforter

away to some little girl with bandaged eyes, who seemed to be seeing 'lions an' tigers an' el'phan's' in the dark. Harry answered the summons as a war-horse responds to the compelling notes of the trumpet. In an instant he was off his chair and trotting toward the door, where, for a second only, he paused. 'I'll come again,' he promised, but I saw him no more that day.

It was not as casual a matter to pick up the Comforter and carry him off to the Aquarium as I had imagined it would be. Indeed, I found my plan passed on from one high authority to another. The question of risking my life in the operating-room could have been lightly and quickly settled; but to take the hospital's idol down-town for a pleasure excursion was a serious matter, requiring reflection.

At last, however, it was arranged. I was to call for my small guest in a taxi-cab at eleven in the morning and drive him directly to the Aquarium, afterward giving him a luncheon suited to his health and tender years, and finally taking him around New York on the yacht which makes that voyage every afternoon during the season. These details arranged, the Comforter and I awaited with such patience as we could the eventful day of the excursion. But during the three days' wait, which seemed so long, the small boy never for one moment lost interest in his other friends, his daily rounds, or his duties toward his fellow-patients. Every morning he came to see me immediately after breakfast, and through him, unconscious reporter that he was, I learned that Willie Maxwell had left the hospital 'just as well as he could be'; that Mrs. Grey had 'dreadful pains and groaned'; that there was a new little girl in 19, with her eyes

all bandaged; and that Jimmie Murphy, a prime favourite of Harry's in the charity ward, had 'gone to live with God.'

Incidentally, besides playing his own small rôle to perfection, Harry became in turn the superintendent, the house physician, various nurses, and even some of the patients. Thus I was privileged to behold Willie Maxwell enjoying the phonograph; while the Comforter's impersonation of 'Mrs. Gwey having a hard pain' greatly comforted that lady when she was well enough to witness it.

My farewell with Harry was highly dramatic; we were separating for twenty-four long hours.

'I only go to bed one more time before we see the 'Quarimum,' were his parting words.

That night I dreamed of the Comforter, and I was back in the hospital before eleven the next day. With equal promptness my young friend presented himself, ready for the excursion. He wore a jaunty blue reefer, a blue cap, and a somewhat flamboyant tie, the latter pinned on him in a jocund moment by the nurse who had dressed him for his outing. The inevitable rose was on his breast. He had never before been in a taxi-cab, and as we rode away I was forced to give him a scientific explanation of how and why our cab went — an explanation which I realized at the time would always be a rosy memory to our chauffeur.

Of the Comforter in the Aquarium I can show no fitting picture. But in memory I see him still, a flash of sunshine rimmed with blue, awestruck before the huge, sleepy alligators, thrilled to the soul by the green moray, fixed and ecstatic in front of the crabs that walked sideways when they were not fighting with one another, and drawing deep

breaths of excitement over the fish that changed colours as one watched. He thought the turtles were the most wonderful things there, until he saw the swordfish, but the fascination of the swordfish paled in turn before the charm of the sea-lions. In front of these he jumped up and down in such uncontrollable delight that every one within sight and hearing smiled in sympathy with him. Also, he became at times Dr. Reynolds gazing at a seal and rubbing his chin; Dr. Murray twirling his mustache in deep reflection before the case of a giant shark; and Mrs. Murphy, a hospital scrub-woman, surveying the eels with arms akimbo. Each pose was wholly unconscious, but I had seen his originals.

In fifteen minutes all the other visitors in the "Quarimum' had forgotten the fish and concentrated their attention on the Comforter. In half an hour they were following him around, listening to his comments. Within an hour they had learned to love him and were extracting from me, by pointed questions, the simple story of his life.

It was hard to tear him away at one o'clock, but the charms of luncheon soothed his disappointment, and the boat-trip was yet to come.

On the yacht the reaction came, after this high entertainment, and for the first half-hour Harry sat quietly by my side, his eyes very big and bright, his cheeks pink with excitement, an occasional deeply breathed 'Oh-h-h!' his only comment, as shore-lines and buildings swept past. It was not long before other passengers began to talk to him, and I recall especially the gentleness with which a certain irascible old man conceded that a pink-and-gold cloud in the west might possibly be part of heaven, with Jimmie Murphy reposing on it.

Riding up-town in our taxi-cab when the day was over, Harry sat very close to me on the back seat, his head resting on my shoulder and his eyes closed. At first I thought he was asleep, but as he broke the silence from time to time with a murmured word about the fish, or the boat, or some other delight of the day, I learned that he was merely busy with the joys of memory. When we reached the hospital he was lifted out of the cab by a waiting orderly, and carried off to his nursery to have his evening meal luxuriously in bed; and as the two disappeared through the big front doors, his reminiscences of eels, sea-lions, and alligators were still floating back to me.

Twice in the busy month that followed I saw the Comforter, making the long up-town journey to the hospital for an hour with the boy. Both times he was full of happy memories of our outing, of which I had given him, as a souvenir, a ''Quarimum' of his own — a glass globe with three goldfish in it. We planned also another jaunt, which should include hay-rides and hens laying eggs and a whole month at the old farm during the summer heat; but this was not to be.

At six o'clock one morning, a week after my second visit to the Comforter, I was awakened by the bell of the telephone beside my bed. When I took up the receiver the voice of Miss Smith came to my ear. It was low, but quite steady. Harry had died a few hours before, she told me, and she thought I might care to come up to the hospital and see him.

There was little I could say to her, except that I would come; but when I laid down the receiver and rose to dress, I found myself facing a world which suddenly seemed appallingly empty because

it lacked the presence of a little boy in blue rompers, with bobbing yellow curls.

It was barely eight o'clock when I opened the familiar hospital door and received the depressed greetings of the clerk at the inquiry-desk, who knew why I had come, and of the elevator-man, who took me up to my old floor. Miss Smith was leaving Harry's nursery as I reached it. Her features twisted as our eyes met. With a silent hand-clasp she turned and went back with me.

The room, usually flooded with sunshine at that hour, was darkened now by drawn shades. On the floor lay the Comforter's toys just as he had left them the day before. A wooden hobby-horse stood near the door. Two brave companies of lead soldiers, drawn up in battle array, stretched from the wall to the foot of his little white bed. A boat I had given him rode at anchor in a tin bath-tub filled with water, and beside it was the ''Quarimum,' its goldfish swimming about in calm content. Outside the windows chirped the sparrows Harry had loved to feed. On the bed a silent, exquisite little figure lay under a white counterpane, covered with pink roses. Speechless, I bent over it, while Miss Smith gazed with wet eyes at her boy.

'We must think of how much suffering he has been spared,' she said at last. 'We must remember that we made him happy. We did make him happy,' she added, softly, 'for we loved him, and he knew it.'

She touched the little hands almost hidden by the roses.

'You knew, didn't you, Harry?' she whispered.

The sparrows still chirped demandingly, for it was the hour when Harry had fed them. Some-

where, far down the corridor, a child was crying — perhaps in terror of visions in the dark. But under his pink roses the Comforter slept on, a little smile puckering the corners of his mouth, as if indeed he knew.

THE WELL

BY WILLIAM WYMARK JACOBS

William Wymark Jacobs (1863-   ) was born in London. He was educated at private schools, and entered the employ of the Post Office Savings Bank at sixteen. Four years later he secured a regular clerkship there. He began his literary career at the age of twenty-one with a contribution to the *Blackfriars Magazine,* a publication conducted by the clerks at the Post Office, and from that he was led to contributing articles to various London papers, though he retained his Civil Service position until 1899. His remarkable acquaintance with nautical subjects, and characters of the coasting trade and seaport wharves, was acquired during several years spent in Wapping, while his father was wharfinger there, as during that period the younger Jacobs was brought into contact with many seamen and wharf hands, and came to know many of them very well.

A noteworthy feature about most of his humorous tales is the fact that he has worked one plot formula again and again. It may be expressed, in general, as a funny turn of the tables. But it is something more than this; it is a double turn of the tables, or a repeated turn. A, let us say, plans something against B; but B outdoes A in his own scheming and puts A to shame. Then A may react and, finally, outdo B. It is a sort of 'boomerang' plot which he has exploited repeatedly, and better than any other short story author. His tragic stories have to do with a slightly different class of characters. The social level is usually higher, a level better adapted to tragic effect as this author is able to secure it.

Mr. Jacobs represents well the author who is both artistic and popular.

Mr. Jacobs is known mostly by his delightfully quaint and humorous character delineations of river, shore, and seafaring folk. The remarkable short story given herewith,

however, is of a very different sort and discloses an unsurpassed mastery of touch. With a sureness of character-drawing which is nothing short of amazing in a humorist, he outlines scene and actors, and when the crises are reached—so completely is all visualized—we are able to infer the swiftmoving climax with scarce the need of a word.

Some of Jacob's most popular collections of stories are *Many Cargoes*; *More Cargoes*; *Short Cruises*; *Odd Craft*; *Captains All*; *Light Freights* and *The Lady of the Barge*. His longer stories include *A Master of Craft*; *Dialstone Lane*; *Salthaven*, *At Sunwich Port*, and *The Monkey's Paw* the most noted of all.

I

Two men stood in the billiard-room of an old country house, talking. Play, which had been of a half-hearted nature, was over, and they sat at the open window, looking out over the park stretching away beneath them, conversing idly.

'Your time's nearly up, Jem,' said one at length. 'This time six weeks you'll be yawning out the honeymoon and cursing the man—woman, I mean—who invented them.'

Jem Benson stretched his long limbs in the chair and grunted in dissent.

'I've never understood it,' continued Wilfred Carr, yawning. 'It's not in my line at all; I never had enough money for my own wants, let alone for two. Perhaps if I were as rich as you or Crœsus I might regard it differently.'

There was just sufficient meaning in the latter part of the remark for his cousin to forbear to reply to it. He continued to gaze out of the window and to smoke slowly.

'Not being as rich as Crœsus — or you,' resumed Carr, regarding him from beneath lowered lids, 'I paddle my own canoe down the stream of Time, and, tying it to my friends' door-posts, go in to eat their dinners.'

'Quite Venetian,' said Jem Benson, still looking out of the window. 'It's not a bad thing for you, Wilfred, that you have the door-posts and dinners — and friends.'

Carr grunted in his turn. 'Seriously, though, Jem,' he said, slowly, 'you're a lucky fellow, a very lucky fellow. If there is a better girl above ground than Olive, I should like to see her.'

'Yes,' said the other, quietly.

'She's such an exceptional girl,' continued Carr, staring out of the window. 'She's so good and gentle. She thinks you are a bundle of all the virtues.'

He laughed frankly and joyously, but the other man did not join him.

'Strong sense of right and wrong, though,' continued Carr, musingly. 'Do you know, I believe that if she found out that you were not —'

'Not what?' demanded Benson, turning upon him fiercely. 'Not what?'

'Everything that you are,' returned his cousin, with a grin that belied his words, 'I believe she'd drop you.'

'Talk about something else,' said Benson, slowly, 'your pleasantries are not always in the best taste.'

Wilfred Carr rose and taking a cue from the rack, bent over the board and practised one or two favourite shots. 'The only subject I can talk about just at present is my own financial affairs,' he said, slowly, as he walked round the table.

'Talk about something else,' said Benson again, bluntly.

'And the two things are connected,' said Carr, and dropping his cue he half sat on the table and eyed his cousin.

There was a long silence. Benson pitched the end of his cigar out of the window, and leaning back closed his eyes.

'Do you follow me?' inquired Carr at length.

Benson opened his eyes and nodded at the window.

'Do you want to follow my cigar?' he demanded.

'I should prefer to depart by the usual way for your sake,' returned the other, unabashed. 'If I left by the window all sorts of questions would be asked, and you know what a talkative chap I am.'

'So long as you don't talk about my affairs,' returned the other, restraining himself by an obvious effort, 'you can talk yourself hoarse.'

'I'm in a mess,' said Carr, slowly, 'a devil of a mess. If I don't raise fifteen hundred by this day fortnight, I may be getting my board and lodging free.'

'Would that be any change?' questioned Benson.

'The quality would,' retorted the other. 'The address also would not be good. Seriously, Jem, will you let me have the fifteen hundred?'

'No,' said the other, simply.

Carr went white. 'It's to save me from ruin,' he said, thickly.

'I've helped you till I'm tired,' said Benson, turning and regarding him, 'and it is all to no good. If you've got into a mess, get out of it. You should not be so fond of giving autographs away.'

'It's foolish, I admit,' said Carr, deliberately. 'I won't do so any more. By the way, I've got some to sell. You needn't sneer. They're not my own.'

'Whose are they?' inquired the other.

'Yours.'

Benson got up from his chair and crossed over to him. 'What is this?' he asked quietly. 'Blackmail?'

'Call it what you like,' said Carr. 'I've got some letters for sale, price fifteen hundred. And I know a man who would buy them at that price for the mere chance of getting Olive from you. I'll give you first offer.'

'If you have got any letters bearing my signature, you will be good enough to give them to me,' said Benson, very slowly.

'They're mine,' said Carr lightly; 'given to me by the lady you wrote them to. I must say that they are not all in the best possible taste.'

His cousin reached forward suddenly, and catching him by the collar of his coat pinned him down on the table.

'Give me those letters,' he breathed, sticking his face close to Carr's.

'They're not here,' said Carr, struggling. 'I'm not a fool. Let me go, or I'll raise the price.'

The other man raised him from the table in his powerful hands, apparently with the intention of dashing his head against it. Then suddenly his hold relaxed as an astonished-looking maid-servant entered the room with letters. Carr sat up hastily.

'That's how it was done,' said Benson, for the girl's benefit as he took the letters.

'I don't wonder at the other man making him pay for it, then,' said Carr, blandly.

'You will give me those letters?' said Benson, suggestively, as the girl left the room.

'At the price I mentioned, yes,' said Carr; 'but so sure as I am a living man, if you lay your clumsy hands on me again, I'll double it. Now, I'll leave you for a time while you think it over.'

He took a cigar from the box and lighting it carefully quitted the room. His cousin waited until the door had closed behind him, and then turning to the window sat there in a fit of fury as silent as it was terrible.

The air was fresh and sweet from the park, heavy with the scent of new-mown grass. The fragrance of a cigar was now added to it, and glancing out he saw his cousin pacing slowly by. He rose and went to the door, and then, apparently altering his mind, he returned to the window and watched the figure of his cousin as it moved slowly away into the moonlight. Then he rose again, and, for a long time the room was empty.

. . . . . .

It was empty when Mrs. Benson came in some time later to say good-night to her son on her way to bed. She walked slowly round the table, and pausing at the window gazed from it in idle thought, until she saw the figure of her son advancing with rapid strides toward the house. He looked up at the window.

'Good-night,' said she.

'Good-night,' said Benson, in a deep voice.

'Where is Wilfred?'

'Oh, he has gone,' said Benson.

'Gone?'

'We had a few words; he was wanting money again, and I gave him a piece of my mind. I don't think we shall see him again.'

'Poor Wilfred!' sighed Mrs. Benson. 'He is always in trouble of some sort. I hope that you were not too hard upon him.'

'No more than he deserved,' said her son, sternly. 'Good-night.'

II

The well, which had long ago fallen into disuse, was almost hidden by the thick tangle of undergrowth which ran riot at that corner of the old park. It was partly covered by the shrunken half of a lid, above which a rusty windlass creaked in company with the music of the pines when the wind blew strongly. The full light of the sun never reached it, and the ground surrounding it was moist and green when other parts of the park were gaping with the heat.

Two people walking slowly round the park in the fragrant stillness of a summer evening strayed in the direction of the well.

'No use going through this wilderness, Olive,' said Benson, pausing on the outskirts of the pines and eying with some disfavour the gloom beyond.

'Best part of the park,' said the girl briskly; 'you know it's my favourite spot.'

'I know you're very fond of sitting on the coping,' said the man slowly, 'and I wish you wouldn't. One day you will lean back too far and fall in.'

'And make the acquaintance of Truth,' said Olive lightly. 'Come along.'

She ran from him and was lost in the shadow of the pines, the bracken crackling beneath her feet as she ran. Her companion followed slowly, and emerging from the gloom saw her poised daintily

on the edge of the well with her feet hidden in the rank grass and nettles which surrounded it. She motioned her companion to take a seat by her side, and smiled softly as she felt a strong arm passed about her waist.

'I like this place,' said she, breaking a long silence, 'it is so dismal — so uncanny. Do you know *I* wouldn't dare to sit here alone, Jem. I should imagine that all sorts of dreadful things were hidden behind the bushes and trees, waiting to spring out on me. Ugh!'

'You'd better let me take you in,' said her companion tenderly; 'the well isn't always wholesome, especially in the hot weather. Let's make a move.'

The girl gave an obstinate little shake, and settled herself more securely on her seat.

'Smoke your cigar in peace,' she said quietly. 'I am settled here for a quiet talk. Has anything been heard from Wilfred yet?'

'Nothing.'

'Quite a dramatic disappearance, isn't it?' she continued. 'Another scrape, I suppose, and another letter for you in the same old strain: "Dear Jem, help me out."'

Jem Benson blew a cloud of fragrant smoke into the air, and holding his cigar between his teeth brushed away the ash from his coat sleeves.

'I wonder what he would have done without you,' said the girl, pressing his arm affectionately. 'Gone under long ago, I suppose. When we are married, Jem, I shall presume upon the relationship to lecture him. He is very wild, but he has his good points, poor fellow.'

'I never saw them,' said Benson, with startling bitterness. 'God knows I never saw them.'

'He's nobody's enemy but his own,' said the girl, startled by this outburst.

'You don't know much about him,' said the other, sharply. 'He was not above blackmail; not above ruining the life of a friend to do himself a benefit. A loafer, a cur, and a liar!'

The girl looked up at him soberly and timidly and took his arm without a word, and they both sat silent while evening deepened into night and the beams of the moon, filtering through the branches, surrounded them with a silver network. Her head sank upon his shoulder, till suddenly with a sharp cry she sprang to her feet.

'What was that?' she cried breathlessly.

'What was what?' demanded Benson, springing up and clutching her fast by the arm.

She caught her breath and tried to laugh. 'You're hurting me, Jem.'

His hold relaxed.

'What is the matter?' he asked gently. 'What was it startled you?'

'I was startled,' she said, slowly, putting her hands on his shoulder. 'I suppose the words I used just now are ringing in my ears, but I fancied that somebody behind us whispered, "Jem, help me out."'

'Fancy,' repeated Benson, and his voice shook; 'but these fancies are not good for you. You—are frightened—at the dark and the gloom of these trees. Let me take you back to the house.'

'No, I'm not frightened,' said the girl, reseating herself. 'I should never be really frightened of anything when you were with me, Jem. I'm surprised at myself for being so silly.'

The man made no reply but stood, a strong, dark figure, a yard or two from the well, as though waiting for her to join him.

'Come and sit down, sir,' cried Olive, patting the brickwork with her small, white hand, 'one would think that you did not like your company.'

He obeyed slowly and took a seat by her side, drawing so hard at his cigar that the light of it shone upon his face at every breath. He passed his arm, firm and rigid as steel, behind her, with his hand resting on the brickwork beyond.

'Are you warm enough?' he asked tenderly as she made a little movement.

'Pretty fair,' she shivered; 'one oughtn't to be cold at this time of the year, but there's a cold, damp air comes up from the well.'

As she spoke a faint splash sounded from the depth below, and for the second time that evening, she sprang from the well with a little cry of dismay.

'What is it now?' he asked in a fearful voice. He stood by her side and gazed at the well, as though half expecting to see the cause of her alarm emerge from it.

'Oh, my bracelet,' she cried in distress, 'my poor mother's bracelet. I've dropped it down the well.'

'Your bracelet?' repeated Benson, dully. 'Your bracelet? The diamond one?'

'The one that was my mother's,' said Olive. 'Oh, we can get it back surely. We must have the water drained off.'

'Your bracelet!' repeated Benson, stupidly.

'Jem,' said the girl in terrified tones, 'dear Jem, what is the matter?'

For the man she loved was standing regarding her with horror. The moon which touched it was

not responsible for all the whiteness of the distorted face, and she shrank back in fear to the edge of the well. He saw her fear and by a mighty effort regained his composure and took her hand.

'Poor little girl,' he murmured, 'you frightened me. I was not looking when you cried, and I thought that you were slipping from my arms, down — down ——'

His voice broke, and the girl throwing herself into his arms clung to him convulsively.

'There, there,' said Benson, fondly, 'don't cry, don't cry.'

'To-morrow,' said Olive, half-laughing, half-crying, 'we will come round the well with hook and line and fish for it. It will be quite a new sport.'

'No, we must try some other way,' said Benson. 'You shall have it back.'

'How?' asked the girl.

'You shall see,' said Benson. 'To-morrow morning at latest you shall have it back. Till then promise me that you will not mention your loss to anyone. Promise.'

'I promise,' said Olive, wonderingly. 'but why not?'

'It is of great value, for one thing; and — But there — there are many reasons. For one thing it is my duty to get it for you.'

'Wouldn't you like to jump down for it?' she asked mischievously. 'Listen.'

She stooped for a stone and dropped it down.

'Fancy being where that is now,' she said, peering into the blackness; 'fancy going round and round like a mouse in a pail, clutching at the slimy sides, with the water filling your mouth, and looking up to the little patch of sky above.'

'You had better come in,' said Benson, very quietly. 'You are developing a taste for the morbid and horrible.'

The girl turned, and taking his arm walked slowly in the direction of the house; Mrs. Benson, who was sitting in the porch, rose to receive them.

'You shouldn't have kept her out so long,' she said chidingly. 'Where have you been?'

'Sitting on the well,' said Olive, smiling, 'discussing our future.'

'I don't believe that place is healthy,' said Mrs. Benson, emphatically. 'I really think it might be filled in, Jem.'

'All right,' said her son, slowly. 'Pity it wasn't filled in long ago.'

He took the chair vacated by his mother as she entered the house with Olive, and with his hands hanging limply over the sides sat in deep thought. After a time he rose, and going upstairs to a room which was set apart for sporting requisites selected a sea fishing line and some hooks and stole softly downstairs again. He walked swiftly across the park in the direction of the well, turning before he entered the shadow of the trees to look back at the lighted windows of the house. Then having arranged his line he sat on the edge of the well and cautiously lowered it.

He sat with his lips compressed, occasionally looking about him in a startled fashion, as though he half expected to see something peering at him from the belt of trees. Time after time he lowered his line until at length in pulling it up he heard a little metallic tinkle against the side of the well.

He held his breath then, and forgetting his fears drew the line in inch by inch, so as not to

lose its precious burden. His pulse beat rapidly, and his eyes were bright. As the line came slowly in he saw the catch hanging to the hook, and with a steady hand drew the last few feet in. Then he saw that instead of the bracelet he had hooked a bunch of keys.

With a faint cry he shook them from the hook into the water below, and stood breathing heavily. Not a sound broke the stillness of the night. He walked up and down a bit and stretched his great muscles; then he came back to the well and resumed his task.

For an hour or more the line was lowered without result. In his eagerness he forgot his fears, and with eyes bent down the well fished slowly and carefully. Twice the hook came entangled in something, and was with difficulty released. It caught a third time, and all his efforts failed to free it. Then he dropped the line down the well, and with head bent walked toward the house.

He went first to the stables at the rear, and then retiring to his room for some time paced restlessly up and down. Then without removing his clothes he flung himself upon the bed and fell into a troubled sleep.

III

Long before anybody else was astir he arose and stole softly downstairs. The sunlight was stealing in at every crevice, and flashing in long streaks across the darkened rooms. The dining-room into which he looked struck chill and cheerless in the dark yellow light which came through the lowered blinds. He remembered that it had the same appearance when his father lay dead in the house; now, as then, everything seemed

ghastly and unreal; the very chairs standing as their occupants had left them the night before seemed to be indulging in some dark communication of ideas.

Slowly and noiselessly he opened the hall door and passed into the fragrant air beyond. The sun was shining on the drenched grass and trees, and a slowly vanishing white mist rolled like smoke about the grounds. For a moment he stood, breathing deeply the sweet air of the morning, and then walked slowly in the direction of the stables.

The rusty creaking of a pump-handle and a spatter of water upon the red-tiled courtyard showed that somebody else was astir, and a few steps farther he beheld a brawny, sandy-haired man gasping wildly under severe self-infliction at the pump.

'Everything ready, George?' he asked quietly.

'Yes, sir,' said the man, straightening up suddenly and touching his forehead. 'Bob's just finishing the arrangements inside. It's a lovely morning for a dip. The water in that well must be just icy.'

'Be as quick as you can,' said Benson impatiently.

'Very good, sir,' said George, burnishing his face harshly with a very small towel which had been hanging over the top of the pump. 'Hurry up, Bob.'

In answer to his summons a man appeared at the door of the stable with a coil of stout rope over his arm and a large metal candlestick in his hand.

'Just to try the air, sir,' said George, following his master's glance, 'a well gets rather foul sometimes, but if a candle can live down it, a man can.'

His master nodded, and the man, hastily pulling up the neck of his shirt and thrusting his arm into his coat, followed him as he led the way slowly to the well.

'Beg pardon, sir,' said George, drawing up to his side, 'but you are not looking over and above well this morning. If you'll let me go down I'd enjoy the bath.'

'No, no,' said Benson, peremptorily.

'You ain't fit to go down, sir,' persisted his follower. 'I've never seen you look so before. Now if—'

'Mind your business,' said his master curtly.

George became silent and the three walked with swinging strides through the long wet grass to the well. Bob flung the rope on the ground and at a sign from his master handed him the candlestick.

'Here's the line for it, sir,' said Bob, fumbling in his pockets.

Benson took it from him and slowly tied it to the candlestick. Then he placed it on the edge of the well, and striking a match, lit the candle and began slowly to lower it.

'Hold hard, sir,' said George quickly, laying his hand on his arm, 'you must not tilt it or the string'll burn through.'

Even as he spoke the string parted and the candlestick fell into the water below.

'I'll soon get another,' said George, starting up.

'Never mind, the well's all right,' said Benson.

'It won't take a moment, sir,' said the other over his shoulder.

'Are you master here, or am I?' said Benson hoarsely.

George came back slowly, a glance at his master's face stopping the protests upon his tongue,

and he stood by watching him sulkily as he sat on the well and removed his outer garments. Both men watched him curiously, as having completed his preparations he stood grim and silent with his hands by his side.

'I wish you'd let me go down, sir,' said George, plucking up courage to address him. 'You ain't fit to go, you've got a chill or something. I shouldn't wonder it's the typhoid. They've got it in the village bad.'

For a moment Benson looked at him angrily, then his gaze softened. 'Not this time, George,' he said quietly. He took the looped end of the rope and placed it under his arms, and sitting down threw one leg over the side of the well.

'How are you going about it, sir?' queried George, laying hold of the rope and signing to Bob to do the same.

'I'll call out when I reach the water,' said Benson; 'then pay out three yards more quickly so that I can get to the bottom.'

'Very good, sir,' answered both.

Their master threw the other leg over the coping and sat motionless. His back was turned toward the men as he sat with head bent, looking down the shaft. He sat for so long that George became uneasy.

'All right, sir?' he inquired.

'Yes,' said Benson, slowly. 'If I tug at the rope, George, pull up at once. Lower away.'

The rope passed steadily through their hands until a hollow cry from the darkness below and a faint splashing warned them that he had reached the water. They gave him three yards more and stood with relaxed grasp and straining ears, waiting.

'He's gone under,' said Bob in a low voice.

The other nodded, and moistening his huge palms took a firmer grip of the rope.

Fully a minute passed, and the men began to exchange uneasy glances. Then a sudden tremendous jerk followed by a series of feebler ones nearly tore the rope from their grasp.

'Pull!' shouted George, placing one foot on the side and hauling desperately. 'Pull! pull! He's stuck fast; he's not coming; P—U—LL!'

In response to their terrific exertions the rope came slowly up, inch by inch until at length a violent splashing was heard, and at the same moment a scream of unutterable horror came echoing up the shaft.

'What a weight he is!' panted Bob. 'He's stuck fast or something. Keep still, sir; for heaven's sake, keep still.'

For the taut rope was being jerked violently by the struggles of the weight at the end of it. Both men with grunts and sighs, hauled it up foot by foot.

'All right, sir,' cried George cheerfully.

He had one foot against the well, and was pulling manfully; the burden was nearing the top. A long pull and a strong pull, and the face of a dead man with mud in the eyes and nostrils came peering over the edge. Behind it was the ghastly face of his master; but this he saw too late, for with a great cry he let go his hold of the rope and stepped back. The suddenness overthrew his assistant, and the rope tore through his hands. There was a frightful splash.

'You fool!' stammered Bob, and ran to the well helplessly.

'Run!' cried George. 'Run for another line.'

He bent over the coping and called eagerly down as his assistant sped back to the stables shouting wildly. His voice re-echoed down the shaft, but all else was silence.

'MOLLY McGUIRE, FOURTEEN'

By Frederick Stuart Greene

Frederick Stuart Greene (1870-) is a versatile genius, having achieved distinction in his profession of civil engineering as well as in letters. He was born in Virginia, U. S. A. At the age of sixteen, he entered the Virginia Military Institute where he was graduated in 1890 at the foot of his class. When he left his alma mater he determined never again to wear uniform, but his training was better than he knew. Having specialized in civil engineering, he followed successfully this pursuit until May 14, 1917.

Meantime, at the age of forty-four, he was moved to give an account of a venture in real life, the building of a home on Long Island. 'Stictuit' appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post*, the editor having paid two hundred dollars for it. 'The literary vaccine took so violently,' says the author, 'that it has cost me, through neglect of legitimate business, some twenty thousand dollars.' In any event, Mr. Greene gave two years of hard work to learning the art of constructing short stories and succeeded in creating a demand from editors of foremost publications. *The Century*, *The Metropolitan*, and *Mclure's* are among the periodicals which bought his narratives. 'The Cat of the Cane-Brake' (*Metropolitan*, August, 1916) was ranked by Edward J. O'Brien as a leader in over two thousand stories appearing in that year, and was reprinted in Mr. O'Brien's Best Short Stories of 1916.

In advancing professionally, Mr. Greene early found his way to New York. When war was declared in 1917, he secured his Captain's commission, and served in the fighting in France. After the war he returned to the life of a civilian, and is now Superintendent of the Department of Public Works of the State of New York.

General Tazewell entered his office and, humming a tune slightly off the key, searched rapidly through his morning mail. Reaching the last envelope, he clucked softly, and followed the odd sound by a prolonged, gently breathed 'Ah-h!'

'I wonder,' he said aloud, 'what's wrong with my friend Molly, Fourteen. This is the first alumni day in nine, no, ten years, that he's failed to report.'

Edward Tazewell, superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute, looked years younger than his friends knew him to be. On this June morning, trim in white uniform, his shoulders held, as always, well back, he did not appear a day above fifty. A rustle of skirts interrupted the general's thoughts. He rose quickly, standing at attention.

'Has it come, Colonel?' He had held that rank during their courtship, and Mrs. Tazewell seldom used the higher title.

'No, my dear; his letter is not here.'

'Well, don't be disappointed; the institute doesn't need the money.' Mrs. Tazewell had a brisk, cheerful way of speaking.

'I don't care a hang about the money, Evelyn; I want to see him make good. To have him fail now would hurt.'

'Perhaps the mail is late.' She glanced at the clock. 'My gracious! They'll all be down in a minute, and I haven't told Lydia about the waffles.' At the door she stopped and asked eagerly, 'Is it all right about Mr. Duval?'

'I think it will be; the board is to decide his case to-day.'

'Edward, they just must agree!' Mrs. Tazewell declared.

The general joined her.

'I believe you are more concerned about Duval than I am about Fourteen's letter. I've been too busy to read Mrs. Duval's note. Did it please you?'

She took his arm and drew him out through the wide doorway to the porch.

'Oh, it must mean so much to the old cadets to feel that they are a part of all this!' Her gesture took in the level acres of the parade-ground, glimmering brilliant green under the morning sun. Beyond, the mountains stretched mile after mile, an unbroken chain of rugged, blue peaks.

The general smiled into her glowing face.

'They can't all see it with your bright eyes, Evelyn,' he said, and not one of the six hundred cadets under his command would have recognized his voice. 'But tell me about Mrs. Duval's letter.'

'Every sentence in it has a nice, whimsical twist. I know I shall like her.'

'You were careful to say I could make no definite promise?' the general asked seriously.

'Indeed I was. She has not told her husband a word about what we hope the board will do; she has persuaded him to come just to please her.'

'How about Duval's mother?'

'I'm not going to tell that dear old lady a word until everything is settled. She can reach here in four hours.' Mrs. Tazewell held up her hand. 'Listen!' From far down the valley came faintly the sound of a whistle. 'That's the Richmond train. I feel sure it will bring Fourteen's letter.' She turned quickly. 'Gracious! I've forgotton all about Lydia!'

Finals were in full swing, the most trying time of the year for the general and his wife, a week of morning drills, review and parade at sundown,

and dances at night, at which they must at least appear. The small college town was jammed to the last attic-room with fathers and mothers of the cadets, with all of whom the general must shake hands. His own home was crowded with officials from Washington and Richmond. In his big heart General Tazewell liked all this gay turmoil; the knotted contour of his forehead had come from concentration upon higher mathematics, not from impatience.

Later that morning, when Mrs. Tazewell had poured coffee from her ancient silver urn for her many guests, an orderly entered, and placed a letter before the general. He glanced at the large envelope, but put it aside unopened.

'Oh, Colonel, please!' Mrs. Tazewell smiled down the long table. 'Won't you all let him just take one look? We're so anxious for a certain letter to-day!'

The superintendent opened the envelope.

'Great Scott, General! Do you get them like that every day?'

Mrs. Tazewell sprang to her feet, 'There! I knew Fourteen would not fail you!'

Two one-thousand-dollar bills had fallen from the opened envelope, and though the general did not smile, content showed in his homely face.

'Now the day is nearly perfect,' Mrs. Tazewell said to the distinguished guest on her right, no less a personage than the chief of staff of the United States Army.

'With such a windfall, Madam, and such waffles, I should call the day entirely perfect,' the officer answered.

Given unlimited funds to spend, it would still be impossible to build another institution that could

have the spirit of V. M. I. That collection of historic buildings dominated by the war-scarred barracks, the parade-ground on which Jackson and Lee reviewed the cadets, the library filled with records and portraits of the institute's battle-famed sons, the grounds studded with war-trophies—all these give to the little kingdom tucked away in the heart of the Blue Ridge traditions that are unique.

To an outsider the officers will speak of the Battle of New Market, that red-hot engagement in the valley where the V. M. I. battalion made its charge. With sparkling eyes they tell how those boys—pitifully young boys, called in the dying hours of the Confederacy—waited from daybreak, fretting to go under fire; how they steadily worked their way forward, reaching the front late in the afternoon, and charged in perfect formation through a straggling regiment of beaten, retreating veterans. They will describe that steady rush across the open wheat-field straight into a driving hail of Minié balls, while shells, bursting above, tore ragged gaps in the ranks; how without disorder, those gaps were closed, and finally, with a rebel yell ringing shrilly from their young throats, the battalion plunged up the hill, captured the battery, and put the enemy to flight.

With eyes that do not sparkle they tell more: how, of that band of two hundred and seventy-nine, fifty-seven boys fell wounded and dead on that shot-torn field.

If you still show interest, you may hear that Stonewall Jackson was an officer of the institute; how in a day after Virginia had seceded he changed from an eccentric professor to an inspired soldier, and, gathering a company of the older cadets, seized

a canal-boat packet, and floated down the James to Richmond and undying glory.

And there is Lincoln's answer to the impatient statesman who demanded to know why the Federal Army took so long to put down a starving nation.

'We could do it in a month,' the great man told him, 'were it not for a troublesome little school down in Virginia that turns out new officers as fast as we kill off the old ones.'

These are only three out of the many traditions that the outsider may find set down in the printed history of the old school; but others are known to the insider, and chief among the secret ones are the acts of that mysterious band, the Molly McGuires. Who the members of this carefully selected organization were none save a duly initiated Molly ever knew; but every one connected with the college, from the negroes who swept the long barracks galleries up to the superintendent himself, knew that the sole aim of this clan was to make life interesting for the officers and faculty.

Being in intimate touch with military affairs and gunpowder, a Molly McGuire's favourite means of expressing himself was through an explosion, and the greatest of their many ingenious plots was the blowing up of the arsenal. Though this was carried out twenty years ago, you, if you are an insider, will hear talk of it to this day.

From the fog of secrecy that shrouded the band only these facts drifted clear from the mist: it was formed of boys who could pass some difficult test; it numbered thirteen, never more or less.

After breakfast on that alumni day the general asked himself as he had countless times before, which one of the hundreds in the corps when

the arsenal blew up was the mysterious person who for ten years, without a break, had written to him. Always his letters contained a cash remittance, and always the last page had been signed,

Gratefully yours,

M M

14

Heaven knows the skull and cross-bones with the two M's were familiar enough. Evidently it was a law of the Molly to leave these insignia marked in red somewhere near the spot where one of their bombs had been exploded, and the number of the member who had lighted the fuse was added as a final touch of bravado. The general had seen the sign numbered from one to thirteen at many places in and out of barracks, but nowhere except on these annual letters had he found the number fourteen. He thought that he knew who had blown up that arsenal. The present finals marked the twentieth reunion of the 'Arsenal Class,' and one of the first returning members to report at alumni headquarters had been Bolling, the man he suspected. The general had recognized him at first glance, though his once black hair was streaked with gray. As their hands clasped and each looked steadily into the eye of the other, the general sounded his friendly cluck and then said, with his broadest smile:

'Ah-h, Bolling, too bad we haven't another arsenal ready for you.'

Bolling, true to cadet ethics, which reveals nothing to members of the faculty, had neither denied nor admitted the implied compliment. Now, while going to meet his board of visitors, the general began to doubt. But if not Bolling, who? He reviewed in memory every member of Bolling's class. There were a dozen boys of that year who had sufficient daring; besides, there was always the chance that some member of another class might be guilty. The general dismissed the problem. He had the Duval affair to discuss now, and opening the council-room door, he saluted the members of his august board.

The conference lasted the better part of an hour, but when the superintendent left the room he was smiling. With the spring his step still held he crossed the parade-ground and signalled to his wife when he passed her on the porch. Mrs. Tazewell left her guests, and hurried to join him in his office.

'Tell me quickly, did they agree?' she asked eagerly.

The general began a very creditable jig step, smiling at her the while. It was a boyish trick he allowed himself when well pleased and sure that no cadet was within range.

Mrs. Tazewell put both hands upon his shoulders.

'Now, everything is just right,' she said happily.

The general's jig came to an end.

'But why aren't they here? I wouldn't have Duval miss finals now on any account.'

'He'll be here on time. Mrs. Duval telephoned from Staunton; they're coming by motor.'

'Well, you can now safely notify his mother; she'll have to make an early start to-morrow.' He followed his wife to the door; when she was about to open it, the general took both her hands. 'Evelyn,' he said slowly, 'we are two very happy people, aren't we?'

She showed that she held full partnership in his happiness, and they left the room together.

'Luncheon will be a little late,' Mrs. Tazewell said to her guests; 'we're waiting for some new-comers, the Duvals. It's the twentieth reunion of Mr. Duval's class, and he's bringing his wife, who was a New England girl, I believe.'

She was still talking of the Duvals when a motor, rounding the corner of barracks, turned into the drive leading to headquarters. The general rose, and walked down the brick pathway.

'Welcome, Duval!' he called, then paused. Was this determined-looking man the dreamy boy he had known?

The new arrival sprang from the car, and saluted in old-cadet fashion. A tall, well-knit man, he held himself with military straightness. One look into his frank eyes ended the superintendent's uncertainty.

'I've come to report for duty, General,' Duval's voice had a pleasant ring.

'We've waited twenty years to have you, my boy,' the general answered, and their hands gripped hard.

'I'm glad to be back. It's good to see the old place again, and it's good to see you, General.' Holding the superintendent's hand, Duval looked toward barracks. 'I'm glad she made me come,' he said, as if thinking aloud, and with a note of the old shyness the general had not forgotten. During

the moments they stood together he studied Duval, and was not disappointed.

'Here, you scamp, I have no more time to waste on you,' he said, and turned to Mrs. Duval, helping her from the car.

'Ah, Madam,' he said and bowed, 'I see New England is to be charmingly represented at our finals.' The general liked her thoughtful gray eyes.

Mrs. Duval blushed.

'If I had known what I've been missing, I should have persuaded my husband to bring me here years ago.' She gave him a quick smile. 'Is that the proper answer to a Virginian's greeting? But tell me, General, has he changed?'

'Attention, Peyton Duval!'

Duval straightened.

'Ready for inspection, sir,' he said, a smile easing the firm line of his mouth.

'I'd have known him anywhere by that studious look. But, man, you must be a good two inches taller than when you graduated.' The general stopped abruptly; he had caught the quick flush in Duval's face. He was relieved to hear his wife's voice.

'I couldn't let the Colonel keep you away from me any longer,' she said, shaking hands with Duval. She turned to Mrs. Duval, saying, 'I believe your husband was his favourite cadet.'

She took her guest's arm, and all four walked toward the house. Before reaching the porch the general saw Mrs. Tazewell lean close to her companion; though he caught no word of the hastily whispered sentence, Mrs. Duval's glance toward her husband told him what had been said.

During the introductions he noticed that Duval drew immediate attention. His manner, even

during this trivial observance, left an impression of quiet strength. Later, the chief of staff said:

'Yes, General, I get the same idea. That line from ear to chin is strong. He looks like a man who finishes things, and I'll wager he prefers the hard jobs.'

After luncheon the superintendent found opportunity to ask a question that had long puzzled him. All the guests had left the house except Mrs. Duval, who had stayed behind at his request.

'Come into my office, you two girls,' he said, his eyes twinkling, 'and we will complete the plans of our conspiracy.'

When they were seated, Mrs. Duval leaned toward the general, and her earnestness showed how much this interview meant to her.

'I don't know how to thank you for all — all you have done for Peyton. It will mean, oh, so much to him! More than he has ever admitted even to me.'

Her voice broke, and the general flashed an appeal to his wife. Mrs. Tazewell moved to a seat close beside her guest and said:

'Nothing the colonel has done all this year has given him half so much happiness.' She took in her own the tightly clasped hands in Mrs. Duval's lap.

The General's softest 'Ah-h!' followed an embarrassed cluck.

'Will you permit a question?' he said gently. 'When I recall Duval's fine record — until that unfortunate last day — I've asked myself a thousand times, why in the very last hour, he did that — that incredible thing.'

Mrs. Duval hesitated before answering.

'It is almost impossible to explain; something we women, Mrs. Tazewell, can never quite understand.'

'Ah-h, then he has told you his motive?'

'Oh, many times! He said that he hated being called "Demeritless Duby." He had grown tired of hearing how easily he took calculus and analytical geometry. He longed, he told me, to be known as a daredevil, if for only just once.' Mrs. Duval looked appealingly at the superintendent. 'Can you possibly understand it at all?'

'Yes, I can understand,' the general answered thoughtfully. 'I could understand it better, however, in some other boy, for Duval was the one man of that daredevil class never in a scrape of any kind.' The general remained silent for some moments, his brow knotted in deeper ridges. Then suddenly he rose.

'I have it!' he exclaimed.

'What is it, Colonel?' Mrs. Tazewell asked.

'I've just found out, my dear, that your husband has been blind to several things for a very long time.' He turned to Mrs. Duval with keener interest. 'What else did he tell you?'

'He has often said that he wanted to be a Molly McGuire. That name doesn't sound daredevilish, though, does it?'

General Tazewell chuckled softly.

'Evelyn, you would never think to see him now that he was once dreamy, shy, always keeping in the background except in studies. But Duval a Molly!' A smile smoothed the superintendent's mathematical brow. 'Impossible! So he did that fatal thing because he wanted his classmates to think him a daredevil?'

The conspirators remained in session until the call for review, sounding across the parade-ground, ended the conference. Then three contented people left the general's office. But Mrs. Tazewell made one last protest.

'Colonel, I think it's mean. Can't Mrs. Duval give him just one little hint?'

'No, Evelyn.' The general tried to look stern. 'The board has given orders that only we three are to know what's going to happen.'

The biggest day in all the year at V. M. I. is alumni day, and the biggest parade of her many parades is the alumni review. It is the only formation that permits the mother to hold in one great embrace her sons of to-day and her sons of yesterday, and yesterday on back through the years. Once in a year, on a golden day in June she gathers her children; and all, from the boys still under her care to the gray, age-worn men long gone from it, thrill with loyal memories at her call.

Under the maples bordering the parade-ground is gathered a great throng, a happy, expectant crowd of mothers and fathers, sisters and sweethearts of the cadets, impatient younger brothers, longing for the day when they may take their place in the ranks.

A hundred feet beyond the maples, well out on the field another crowd is waiting, a long double line of men. The superintendent and staff are on their right, he and his aides arrayed in the splendour of full dress, gold-coloured and tasseled. At the general's left stands the oldest of V. M. I.'s sons; from here on down that waiting line age runs the scale. The extreme left is flanked by the youngsters only last year released. These last joke

and laugh, a bit self-conscious in this great gathering of the family.

The ringing notes of a bugle sound from the sally-port. Instantly six hundred cadets come to rigid attention. The captains' swords leap from scabbards. Drums beat a short sharp roll, and Company A comes swinging into view. In perfect step, with every musket held at precise angle, these boys stride over the close-cut turf. Following Company A, another and another come through the sally-port, until the world seems crowded with high-strung, manly lads, marching inspired to the stirring strains of 'Dixie.'

The crowd under the maples, edging forward, breaks into applause. Every head in that double line out on the field is thrown high, every shoulder stiffens. Now and again, above the applause a rebel yell is cried. Often it comes in rusty tone from some old boy, no longer able to hold himself in check.

One after another the companies halt. When all are in place, the gray coats stretch in two long lines from end to end across the broad field.

'Present arms!' is called, and six hundred pieces snap to salute before the alumni.

The band crashes out once more, and 'Dixie' gives place to 'Maryland, My Maryland'; but now the time is not so fast, for the old boys are to have their turn at marching, and the mother remembers that many of them are in truth old boys. The general and his staff step off; behind them, his snow-white head held high, follows a man walking alone. He is dressed all in gray, and his uncertain step is steadied by a long staff of mountain laurel. He is the only one left of 1859, but he carries for his alma mater a love still young in his eighty-

year-old heart. There is a gap behind him, for the institute has lost all her sons of '60. Then come two old men, supporting a third between them. These wish it known that '61 has not forgotten, so they march with their war-maimed brother, who refuses to be left standing like a crane behind. What matters if one leg lies buried at Seven Pines? He *will* march.

Slowly passes this record of the years; from its tottering front ranks of the men of yesterday, through its steady centre of the men to-day, on to the rear-guard of eager, ambitious youth, the old cadets march on. The long column circles about their young brothers and returns, with faces aglow, hearts beating faster.

'Pass in review!' Again the band plays, a quickstep now, and the gray ranks, breaking front, take up their swinging stride. In straight lines, every foot striking and leaving the ground as one, company after company sweeps past the alumni, all the white trouser-legs creasing and smoothing in unison, as if the twelve hundred knees were being bent and straightened by machine. The colours flutter by in the June breeze, the Stars and Stripes on the right, the blue field-flag of Virginia at its left, and the men of the alumni line stand stiff at attention, every head bared.

When the last gray-clad boy had passed from sight through the sally-port, the chief of staff hurried to General Tazewell.

'That's the finest thing I've ever seen in a military way,' he said, wringing the superintendent's hand.

The general flushed.

'Then our boys marched well?'

'They always do; but that review is more than marching; it's the very essence of V. M. I. spirit, past and present, spread out like a picture before us.'

The general, plainly moved, thanked the officer for his appreciation, then turned to search the crowd.

'Have you seen Duval?' he asked.

'Yes, he stayed in his car. Is he ill? His face was white, and once, just as the colours passed, I saw his wife reach over and touch his hand.'

General Tazewell was silent for a moment.

'Come to my office,' he said finally, 'I'll tell you about Duval; it may save you both embarrassment.'

When the superintendent had unbuckled his sword and cigars were lighted, he began speaking with more than his usual earnestness.

'Duval's old home place, where his mother still lives, is in the adjoining county; but his interests are now so wide that he makes New York his headquarters. Of all the boys who have been here, there is not one for whom I hold a higher regard; and yet Duval is not entitled to take part in that review.'

The chief of staff, a good listener, merely bowed.

'Any man, whether he receives his degree or leaves before the four years are served, is considered an alumnus provided he left here in good standing.'

'But Duval surely left in good standing.'

'That's just the trouble; he didn't.' The general drew thoughtfully at his cigar. 'He was the youngest boy in his class and a good soldier, having no demerits charged against him; and you know, sir, that's a record hard to gain here or at West Point. Well, as you will see to-morrow,

our final exercises are opened with a ceremony we have carried out for many years. In the recess back of the rostrum hangs a fine portrait of General Francis Smith, the founder, builder, and rebuilder of the institute after its destruction during the — er — the unfortunate occurrences of sixty-four.'

The chief of staff smiled. 'You mean when General Hunter, after shelling the barracks, committed that act of vandalism of burning all your buildings to the ground ? '

General Tazewell bowed assent.

'This portrait,' he continued, 'is concealed by a curtain. After the tribute has been spoken, the audience rises, the band plays an old march that General Smith had been fond of, and the curtain is drawn slowly aside.'

The army officer touched the general's arm.

'Let me interrupt you. If we in the North could be sentimental as you people down here are, without being afraid of seeming ridiculous, our institutions might gather tradition to their advantage.'

Again the superintendent bowed.

'We had an unusually large crowd in Duval's year. Fitz Lee made the final address, and the rostrum was filled by dignitaries. After General Briggs, then superintendent, had spoken in memory of General Smith, the audience rose ; but when the curtain was drawn the band stopped dead. For a moment a tense silence held the crowd, then from every throat came a sharp gasp, followed again by silence. The strange stillness lasted perhaps five seconds, then someone laughed ; another and another took it up until the room shook with uncontrolled shouts. Briggs, who faced the audience, yelled to the drum-major for music ; but the shouts of laughter rose above the band's notes.

He wheeled at last and faced the picture, and I shall never forget the black look that settled on his face. It is a full-length portrait; the general is seated in deep thought at his desk; but now from the chin hung a long, bushy beard made of cotton; pasted across the calm lips were jet-black moustaches, the horse-hair ends turned fiercely up; a villainous black patch covered the left eye; and above this were heavy, cotton eyebrows. You can imagine how these decorations altered the expression of the benign old gentleman. And there was more. In front of the canvas, rigged out in a moth-eaten uniform of General Smith's, — Heaven only knows where he got it — with face, made up to match the changed portrait, was seated, in the same pose, scowling in exactly the same way, a replica of our revered superintendent. Briggs reached that boy in one bound and tore away the false beard and patch. Then the figure in the ludicrously bagging uniform rose and bowed to the faculty and the hysterical audience. It was our exemplary cadet, Peyton Duval!'

The army officer put aside his cigar.

'Had he gone suddenly crazy?'

'I had some such idea until to-day,' the general answered. 'But to end my account: Briggs was trembling with rage.'

'"Report to your room under close arrest, sir!" he ordered in his gruff rumble. And that boy, saluting with exaggerated deference, turned and marched down the aisle, through all that crowd of people, his head high and a smile of triumph on his lips.'

'No'— the general paused, distress in his kind face —'no, that's not altogether correct. I saw his mother in the audience. She sat stunned, white,

no tears in her shame-stricken eyes. Duval saw her, too. He faltered when he reached her; then walked on again, his head held not so high.'

'What a fool trick! What a breach of discipline!' the chief of staff exclaimed.

'He paid for it; you saw to-day that he's paying still.' The general remained silent for some moments. 'Well, the curtain, of course, was redrawn, and later, during one of the speeches, Briggs handed a sheet of paper to the adjutant. After the exercises the order that he had hastily written was read before the battalion and the crowd witnessing the last formation on the parade ground. It was as significant as it was brief: "Cadet Duval, for conduct unbecoming a soldier and a gentleman, is hereby dismissed from the institute."'

'I understand now why he did not join his classmates in that impressive review,' the chief of staff said.

'*Could not* join them,' replied General Tazewell.

The evening events of alumni day run unfinished into the following morning. There is the superintendent's reception at headquarters, when the old mansion is filled with Southern beauties, visiting and institute officers, and a gentle hurricane of soft, slow-speaking voices. Later the old boys form on the general's broad lawn, and, with the band leading, march through the summer night to the mess-hall for their annual smoker. Here until mid-night speeches of V. M. I. achievements are applauded as heartily by the women as by their husbands. Then follows another traditional ceremony, never omitted. When the last speech has been made, the members of the class celebrating

its twentieth anniversary gather about the superintendent and march back to headquarters to enjoy just one hour or more of memories. They cling, these old sons of V. M. I., to the last minute of the day set apart for them. When all are seated about the general's big office table, Old Ben enters, smiling his wide smile and carrying two great pitchers, their silver sides thickly frosted and bunches of fresh mint showing above their wide mouths. Following Old Ben comes Old Ben's boy, a man of twenty-five who will some day take his father's place as the superintendent's head butler; he carries a small regiment of long-stemmed silver goblets. Bringing up the rear, marches Old Ben's son's son, barefooted and bow-legged, his white teeth gleaming behind the grin that splits his black, shining face. On little Benjamin's tray are piled beaten biscuits, divided in exact halves, with slices of Virginia ham between.

The night that the 'Arsenal Class' gathered for its hour, the general rose before the toast to absent members had been proposed.

'Gentlemen, your institute's guest of honour this year is the chief of staff of the army; with your consent I should like to have him with us.'

Bolling rose quickly.

'By all means; and I want to break another rule. I move we have Duval in here, too.'

His motion was carried by a shout of approval; but the general shook his head.

'I took the liberty of asking him to join you, urged him to do so, but he refused.' Looking about him, he saw regret. He hesitated a moment longer, then, and the old boys smiled, he clucked softly: 'Ah-h, Bolling and you, Ainslie—I detail

you to bring Duval in here dead or alive.' His order raised another shout.

All three left the office. General Tazewell returned with the chief of staff, and a moment later Bolling and Ainslie entered with Duval.

The men greeted their dismissed classmate as if his coming was in no wise unusual. Duval's lips were tightly closed; before taking his seat he studied each face about the table, and the general knew that had he found one dissenting look he would have left the room. The superintendent, diplomat that he was, steered the talk into easy channels, and before cigars had been well started all outward traces of tension disappeared. Then the general bade Old Ben clear out, and following the negro, made sure that the door was closed. When he returned there was a look of mystery in his face.

'Gentlemen, I'm going to tell you a secret to-night, one known only to Mrs. Tazewell and me. It's about the arsenal. The story of the arsenal, sir'—General Tazewell bowed to the army officer,—'is old to all here except you; but if I don't talk about it, they will, so I'll save you from them. Twenty years ago the State owned a double-walled building on that hill over yonder,' and the general waved his hand toward the north. 'The roof and outer wall were of stone, the inner wall eighteen inches of hard brick. Inside this solid pile of masonry we had gunpowder stored, four thousand pounds of it. One of these boys'—he smiled at the men about the table—'can probably tell you what kind of job he had to cut through those walls. For the life of me, I've never understood how it was managed. It certainly required heavy labour and good tools; but—and

bear in mind that building was inspected daily — those walls were cut through. The man who did it — '

'Don't look so hard at me, General!' Bolling interrupted.

'Keep your guilty conscience quiet, sir,' the general advised. 'The man who did it must have worked for weeks, always at night and between inspections, not more than an hour at a time. He had to remove and hide all debris, and reface the outer wall after each shift. I tell you, sir, any boy who worked half as hard at his studies would graduate first in his class.'

'And all this just to make a noise?' his guest asked.

'Exactly. Do you wonder my hair is gray? Look at these scamps about you. See that sparkle in their eyes? There's not one of them that doesn't gloat over the affair to this day.

'Well, it came off one rainy, dark night about a month before finals. The corps had just returned from supper, the boys were enjoying a quiet half-hour before study drum, when a terrific blast shook the earth, a tremendous report that sounded like the bursting of a hundred big guns. A blinding flash lighted up the whole place, every building on the grounds staggered, and a moment after a shower of brick and stone struck the metal roof of the barracks. This with the noise of glass, falling in a torrent of shivered panes, made a din that, I tell you, sir, was simply terrifying.'

Bolling, who had listened excitedly, leaped to his feet.

'O you Molly boy! here's to you!' he cried. And in the presence of their superintendent those youngsters of forty or more rose and drank to the

unknown hero who had made their class famous. The chief of staff, falling in with their mood, suggested that he and the general join them and that good sportsman, smiling, held his goblet high.

'Here's long life to the scamp!' he called. 'And may we never have another like him!'

'But, General, if this happened immediately after supper, why couldn't you find the cadet who had been absent from roll-call?' the officer asked.

'You answer that, you rascal,' the superintendent said to Bolling.

'He's at me again!' Bolling assumed an injured tone. 'Nothing I say can hurt my reputation, so here goes. Whoever blew up the arsenal, sir, probably lighted his fuse two or three hours before the spark reached the powder. He was at supper all right with the rest of us; and the man clever enough to get through those walls was smart enough to be talking to some officer, very likely the commandant himself, when that glorious explosion went off.'

'Yes, that's clear. But surely, General Tazewell, you had suspicions?'

A good-natured laugh greeted the question.

'Every boy in the class was under suspicion at one time or another.'

'Oh, no, General, not so bad as that,' Ainslie protested. 'There was little Beverly, the librarian, and Duval here, Russel Coles, and one or two others who were not even called before the court of inquiry.'

'I'm interested to know what you did to catch your man,' the officer persisted.

'We were extremely clever about it.' The general winked broadly at the Arsenal Class. 'Long-roll was beaten immediately, but the ser-

geants reported all present or accounted for. We held the men in ranks, however, while we inspected barracks. Result: one pair of muddy shoes. The next morning we found strips of burlap wrapped like a turban about the head of Washington's statue, and later discovered tracks leading from the arsenal. You know, sir, what a steep bluff there is on this side of the Nile. Well, after our Molly crossed that stream his tracks were worthless as a clue, for he had slipped backward six inches at each step. His foot prints looked as if a giant had made them. "We'll get him on the flat ground on the other side," we said, and hurried across the stream to fit the captured shoes into what prints we might find there. No use! We picked up the trail, but the steps were huge, shapeless affairs; the thoughtful gentleman had wrapped both feet in burlap for his enterprise. He used it later, I fancy, for Washington's head-dress.'

'That boy, General, had a greater genius for making trouble than any regular in the army,' the chief of staff declared.

'I suppose that's a compliment, sir; not, however, for our detective powers. But now, gentlemen, for that secret I promised.' The general brought a bundle of papers from the safe. 'Here's the strongest thing connected with the arsenal affair; and I'll ask you to consider what I say from now on an institute secret.' Chairs were drawn closer to the table. 'Ten years ago I received this letter.'

He opened one of the envelopes and read:

Dear General Tazewell:

I am sending 500 dollars in cash on account for bill enclosed. I blew up the arsenal. It has taken me all these years to realize that what I once thought a joke

was nothing less than a crime against the institute and the State.

As large a remittance as I can afford will be sent each year until the entire amount is paid. Will you kindly keep these letters secret? It will oblige me if you will turn the money over to the treasurer, saying it comes from one who begs you not to reveal his name. I hope to wipe out the obligation in ten years. You may then speak of the matter if you wish.

The name in which this letter is registered is fictitious, but I know if I ask it you will make no effort to discover my identity.

General Tazewell spread the letter on the table, and all saw the crudely drawn skull and bones, the two M's and the figure 14. A swift exchange of meaning glances passed between at least four of the men about the table.

‘Why fourteen?’ Duval asked, joining for the first time in the general talk. ‘I thought there never was a fourteenth.’

‘Of course there wasn't,’ Bolling answered. ‘That fellow must be crazy.’

‘Well, gentlemen,’ here's the itemized bill. The general showed a neatly typewritten statement.

MOLLY MCGUIRE 14

TO THE VIRGINIA MILITARY INSTITUTE

		Dr.
Value of building destroyed ...	...	$ 5,000·00
Black powder, 4,000 lbs., @ 12 cts.	...	480·00
Glass replaced, 1,800 panes, @ 20 cts.		360·00
Repairs to roof of barracks ...	...	250·00
Net amount ...	...	$ 6,090·00
Compound interest, 10 years, @ 6%	...	4,816·22
Total ...	...	$ 10,906·22
Less on account ...	...	500·00
Balance due ...	...	$ 10,406·22

During the comments following the inspection of the statement, Bolling called out tragically:

'At last I stand vindicated! You know, General, I could never have computed that compound interest.'

'I'm not so sure,' the superintendent said dryly. 'Some of you fellows have mighty smart stenographers.'

'But to finish my story. Each year, always on or just before alumni day, I have had a letter from Molly, Fourteen. They have come from all sorts of places. The first was postmarked San Francisco, there were two from London, one from Dawson City, and so on. The money inclosed, except to-day's remittance, which, by the way, came from Montreal, has always been in one bill. Once he sent fifty dollars and apologized, saying he had had a bad year of it.' The general paused and thoughtfully collected the papers. 'I'd have sent that back if I'd known where to reach him.'

'How does the account stand now, General?'

'The interest has been carefully recomputed each year. The balance this morning was just under one hundred dollars.'

The chief of staff rose.

'If you will permit a stranger,' he said, and bowed to the men of the Arsenal Class, 'here's to Molly McGuire, Fourteen, who, if I'm any judge, is a soldier and a gentleman.'

And the toast was drunk standing.

The next day shortly before the final exercises General Tazewell spoke to his wife.

'Be sure, Evelyn, to start with Mrs. Duval in five minutes. I have given orders to let old Mrs. Duval wait in the quarters of the officer of the day. Join her there, and take the seats reserved for you.'

New guests were approaching and Mrs. Tazewell had time only to nod assent. The general went at once to his office.

'My compliments to Mr. Duval,' he said to an orderly, 'and ask him to step in here. You will stay outside and see that we are not interrupted.'

The superintendent seated himself with a troubled sigh. 'I'll have some difficulty with him,' he thought. He shook his head doubtfully, but turned smiling to Duval when he entered.

'You sent for me, sir?'

The general caught the strain in Duval's voice; he knew how hard this day was likely to be for his guest.

'Sit down, Duval; we've a few minutes before it's time to go.' When the superintendent chose he could put much kindness in his tone. He so chose now as he asked, 'You're coming with us to Jackson Hall, aren't you?'

Duval rose and paced the room.

'If you don't mind, I'll let Mrs. Duval go without me.' He brought the words out with an effort.

'No, Duval; I want you to go with us.'

'But, General, it will be—' Duval stopped and looked steadily at the superintendent. 'There is something behind all this.'

'Yes, there is; but what it is, you must leave to me,' the general said earnestly.

'You make it hard to refuse you.' Duval's voice was less strained; for a moment the superintendent thought his point won. But suddenly his guest's hands clinched. 'No, General, I cannot do what you ask!'

'Come come, man! It was twenty years ago.'

'Yes, twenty years! Twenty years of regret,' Duval said fiercely. 'Twenty years of remembering the look on my mother's face when her son walked from that hall *disgraced.*'

'My boy, this is morbid. Once more I ask you to come with me. I've saved a seat on the rostrum for you.' The general's tone was still kind.

Duval took a quick step toward him.

'And face that crowd when half of them know that I, a dismissed cadet, have no right even to enter the building? No!' His voice shook. 'No, I will not do it!'

The superintendent rose, his shoulders straight, heels together.

'Steady, Duval!' It was the ringing command that so many cadets had heard and obeyed. 'You'll accompany me, sir, to final exercises to-day!'

Then for both these men life turned swiftly back; in the fraction of a second twenty years of time lay flattened on the trail of its recoil. Duval's body jerked erect, the hand swung to prompt salute.

'Ready, sir!' he answered firmly, though his face had lost all colour.

'Come then, boy!' The general took his arm, and together they headed the group of special guests that filed across the parade-ground.

Final exercises are attended by as many people as can possibly crowd into the Gothic Hall dedicated to the memory of Stonewall Jackson. The enthusiastic audience and the room, stored with pictured records of V. M. I. history, make an interesting sight. Between the high leaded windows are paintings of former institute officers: Colonel Claud Crozet, president of the first board of visitors and before that an officer under Napoleon; Preston, famous for his gallantry in the Mexican War;

Brook, designer and builder of the *Merrimac*; and a score of others in Confederate uniforms. In the place of honour hangs a fine portrait of Jackson, the one showing the misplaced button carelessly pinned to his coat after he had given the original to that little girl in Winchester who cried for it when the great soldier rode one day through the town.

From the flower-covered rostrum, stretching to the rear wall, the cadets sit twenty abreast, clear-eyed athletes, trained to the last ounce after their year of drills and sports. All are eager, expectant, for each will hear for the first time to-day his standing in his class. In the front rows are grouped the first-class men who soon must leave this place that for four years has been home to them. One look into these faces tells better than can a thousand written words their love for the old school. The eagerness in their eyes is veiled by sadness; there is sadness in the way they search uneasily about the familiar room, or turn to one and another, forcing smiles to keep up their drooping spirits.

The side seats are set apart for the mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, of these boys. Southern families are large, but all must be here to see 'brother' graduate. The balcony filled by summer-clad girls curves a great horseshoe above the main floor; here and there the gold-braided uniform of some young officer adds a still brighter tone to this circling bank of colour.

Mrs. Tazewell once said of this gathering: 'Those gray-coated boys at attention in the centre, surrounded by the many-coloured, moving fans, always remind me of a still, blue-gray field with hundreds of butterflies fluttering about its edges.'

When the general and his guests reached the platform he turned to Duval.

'Well, boy, we're mighty glad to have you here again.' He felt Duval's arm trembling in his.

'If I only had the right, I should be proud to be here,' he answered earnestly. Then indicating a far corner: 'May I take that seat?'

'Anywhere you like,' the general answered casually; but he was pleased that Duval had chosen the seat reserved for him. A palm concealed the greater part of the audience from his view.

There are features in the ceremonies that followed unknown to other colleges, and two that for a visitor from above the Mason and Dixon Line are altogether extraordinary. The first is the valedictory address, or, rather, what happens immediately after; for here as elsewhere the student orator thunders platitudes as if proclaiming hitherto unknown truths. But to these boys who have lived for long under the same roof his words are less impersonal; the class listen tensely to reminiscences of their struggles and friendships. When the speaker leaves the platform, usually overcome by the scenes he has sketched and which they all know can never live again, his classmates, crowding about him, grip his hand; handkerchiefs come suddenly into view, and are pressed to eyes that are not ashamed. And the visitor, looking on, be he never so world-hardened, does not smile.

The graduation address, which that day was a call to the patriotism of these boys made by the chief of staff, is followed by the conferring of degrees. As each name is called a cadet steps forward to receive his diploma, signed and sealed by Virginia's governor. Applause sounds through the room; friends cry out his name above the cheers of classmates. Then the cadet turns and searches for the one who is waiting to share his

victory, usually some mother who watches proudly her boy's approach. And when he has placed his degree in her outstretched hand, that man, be he twenty or twenty-seven, lowers his head, his arm closes about the mother's shoulder, and as though the world held only themselves, he kisses her happy, tearful face. It all comes so naturally, so simply, this tribute to parents from these manly boys, that no one wonders, no one smiles.

And so it goes, name after name, on down through the class, applause following each cadet who answers. Then at last the general pauses, and though he has gone through this for many years, humour kindles anew in his eyes when he calls the cadet who has graduated last in his class. At this name all the applause that has gone before is as a summer breeze to the storm of hand-clapping, the cries and cheers that burst from class and friends. For this boy, the last one helped over the fence, has received the 'Bull Dip.' He marches to the platform as proudly as did the first-stand man; and who shall say that his mother is not happy when her boy's diploma, snatched from the teeth of defeat, is safe at last in her keeping?

When the degrees have been given there are only a few minutes left, and that day the audience began to stir, making ready to leave after the army appointments as lieutenants had been announced. But the superintendent held up his hand.

'There is one thing more. Before the battalion forms for the last time this year I have another duty to fulfil.' His eyes swept the crowd. He saw his wife reach out and take Mrs. Duval's hand. Next to Mrs. Duval a white-haired woman was sitting straight in her chair, her lips pressed hard

together. 'To-day,' the general continued, 'the institute will do something for which there is no precedent in her history.' The room became suddenly still; not one fan in that crowded audience was moving. 'Twenty years ago a cadet whose record until the final day of his four years had been without a flaw forgot himself.' He glanced toward the far corner of the rostrum, and saw a face flushed from chin to forehead. Duval had turned toward the speaker; both hands gripped one arm of the chair. 'Forgot himself so far,' the superintendent went on in even voice, 'that he very nearly broke up the final exercises of that year.'

The general turned squarely to Duval with his kind smile.

'I'm afraid we're a bit old-fogy down here at times, for it has taken us all these years to catch the humour of that joke. But, my friends, it was a good joke,'—he faced the audience, which was now smiling with him,—'too good! It caused the dismissal of one of the best students this institute ever matriculated.'

The set lips of the white-haired woman parted; she covered her eyes with one trembling hand.

The general raised his voice.

'And now that time has robbed that joke of its sting, the institute wishes to give that man all the honours the boy had won and would have received.'

Far back in the hall where the men of twenty years ago were gathered a cheer burst from some strong throat, and instantly the tension that held the crowd broke. Wave after wave of applause rang through the big room. The general, signalling for silence, turned to the man hidden behind the palm.

'Mr. Duval, step to the front, sir.'

The great audience rose. Again there was applause, every pair of hands in the room beating furiously together. For a moment Duval did not move; then with an effort he rose and walked unsteadily to the front.

'Mr. Duval'—the general's voice filled the room—'your institute now confers upon you the degree which for so long has been withheld. You will find the number (four) written in its proper place, and as fourth graduate of your class your name will appear hereafter in the register.'

He thrust the diploma into Duval's hand, who stood before him white, shaken, his trembling fingers hardly able to hold this mark of his reinstatement. Again the crowd broke into applause, and the general, throwing his arm about the dazed man's shoulders, shouted above the noise:

'It's all right, boy! It's all right at last!'

When the applause died down he asked Duval if he cared to make some reply; but his old pupil stood still dazed, looking aimlessly over the crowd. Suddenly he started in surprise; a smile parted his set lips. He had seen two upturned faces that were smiling back at him through happy, tear-dimmed eyes. Instantly all hesitation dropped from the man's bearing. Duval left the rostrum, his eyes fixed upon those faces, and walked up the crowded aisle. Before the two women he stopped and put the degree into his mother's old hands; then he bent low and gave his mother the kiss he had lost for her twenty years before.

The crowd was silent while he walked back to his place; no one moved from his seat. But a stir went through the gray field in the centre of the room. Every eye in the cadet ranks had followed their old brother; they knew him now for such, for

he had carried out to the last act the last tradition of the corps. When Duval reached the platform the first captain of those boys sprang to his feet.

'Together, nine for Duval!' he shouted.

Instantly a mighty cheer roared out, rising and falling in unison as they gave the call 'Rah! Rah! Rah!'

Nine times the cry rang from six hundred young throats, followed by the crashing ending: 'V. M. I. Duval! Duval! V. M. I.'

While the visitors were applauding this demonstration the general watched two women holding tightly that age-tinted parchment. He clucked softly and breathed a long-drawn 'Ah-h.' There are moments, he thought, moments in this life.

At his order the cadets marched from the room, company after company, and after them the guests filed out. For the better part of two hours the general had been standing; he sat down now with a sigh of relief. From his chair he would be able to see the formation out on the parade-ground, and the music of 'Auld Lang Syne' would float in to him through the open windows; so he asked to be left alone. The last to go, coming from his corner behind the palm, was Duval. He stopped at the superintedent's chair.

'There is nothing — nothing I can say, General; not just now.' He was dangerously near breaking down. 'Perhaps — perhaps later —'

'There is nothing you need say, boy, now or later.' The general held out his hand. Duval caught it in both his own, gave the general a hard grip, and walked quickly from the room.

For a long time the superintendent sat motionless, smiling. Outside the band had played 'Auld Lang Syne' half-way through before he

lifted the hand Duval had pressed. A crisp yellow bill, released by his opening fingers, rolled open. It was wrapped about a leaf torn from a notebook, and on this paper, scribbled in pencil, the general saw: 'When not even suspected in the arsenal affair, I became desperate. Paid in full.'

M M
14

THE SIRE DE MALÉTROIT'S DOOR

By Robert Louis Stevenson

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850 - 1894) was born and brought up in Edinburgh. As a child he was weak and ailing, and ill-health pursued him all his short life. Yet this chronic invalid, as he may be called, produced an amazing number of stories, essays and poems. As a young man of twenty-eight he published that delightful volume of essays of travel, *An Inland Voyage*, and the next year the companion volume, *Travels with a Donkey*. He had, by constant reading and imitation of the best authors, developed a style all his own which had a singular charm. These books at once attracted the attention of critics. Two other volumes of essays appeared the next two years. Then came the romance which made him world-famous, *Treasure Island*, followed by *Kidnapped*, *Catriona* and *The Master of Ballantrae*. At the age of thirty-nine, finding that he could no longer endure the cold winters of his native land, he took his wife and two children to the island of Samoa in the South Pacific. There he won the devoted friendship of the Samoan chiefs by defending their rights, and there, after five years, they buried their beloved 'Tusitala' (teller of stories).

Stevenson was a brilliant novelist, essayist, poet and short story writer. *A Child's Garden of Verse* contains his best poems. His most noteworthy essays are found in *Memories and Portraits*, and *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*. Most famous among his short stories are 'The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde' (a novelette in length), 'The Pavilion on the Links,' 'Thrawn Janet,' 'Will o' the Mill,' 'The Sire de Malétroit's Door,' 'The Merry Men,' 'Markheim,' and 'A Lodging for the Night.'

Stevenson was a supreme craftsman. In charm, in dash of style, in a sense of form, in pure romantic spirit, and in penetrating human interest, he ranks among the ten greatest short-story-tellers of his era.

DENIS DE BEAULIEU was not yet two-and-twenty, but he counted himself a grown man, and a very accomplished cavalier into the bargain. Lads were early formed in that rough, war-faring epoch; and when one has been in a pitched battle and a dozen raids, has killed one's man in an honourable fashion, and knows a thing or two of strategy and mankind, a certain swagger in the gait is surely to be pardoned. He had put up his horse with due care, and supped with due deliberation; and then, in a very agreeable frame of mind, went out to pay a visit in the gray of the evening. It was not a very wise proceeding on the young man's part. He would have done better to remain beside the fire or go decently to bed. For the town was full of the troops of Burgundy and England under a mixed command; and though Denis was there on safe-conduct, his safe-conduct was like to serve him little on a chance encounter.

It was September, 1429; the weather had fallen sharp; a flighty piping wind, laden with showers, beat about the township; and the dead leaves ran riot along the streets. Here and there a window was already lighted up; and the noise of men-at-arms making merry over supper within, came forth in fits and was swallowed up and carried away by the wind. The night fell swiftly; the flag of England, fluttering on the spire-top, grew ever fainter and fainter against the flying clouds — a black speck like a swallow in the tumultuous, leaden chaos of the sky. As the night fell the wind rose, and began to hoot under archways and roar amid the tree-tops in the valley below the town.

Denis de Beaulieu walked fast and was soon knocking at his friend's door; but though he promised himself to stay only a little while and

make an early return, his welcome was so pleasant, and he found so much to delay him, that it was already long past midnight before he said good-bye upon the threshold. The wind had fallen again in the meanwhile; the night was as black as the grave; not a star, nor a glimmer of moonshine, slipped through the canopy of cloud. Denis was ill-acquainted with the intricate lanes of Château Landon; even by daylight he had found some trouble in picking his way; and in this absolute darkness he soon lost it altogether. He was certain of one thing only — to keep mounting the hill; for his friend's house lay at the lower end, or tail, of Château Landon, while the inn was up at the head, under the great church spire. With this clue to go upon he stumbled and groped forward, now breathing more freely in open places where there was a good slice of sky overhead, now feeling along the wall in stifling closes. It is an eerie and mysterious position to be thus submerged in opaque blackness in an almost unknown town. The silence is terrifying in its possibilities. The touch of cold window-bars to the exploring hand startles the man like the touch of a toad; the inequalities of the pavement shake his heart into his mouth; a piece of denser darkness threatens an ambuscade or a chasm in the pathway; and where the air is brighter, the houses put on strange and bewildering appearances, as if to lead him farther from his way. For Denis, who had to regain his inn without attracting notice, there was real danger as well as mere discomfort in the walk; and he went warily and boldly at once, and at every corner paused to make an observation.

He had been for some time threading a lane so narrow that he could touch a wall on either hand when it began to open out and go sharply down-

ward. Plainly this lay no longer in the direction of his inn: but the hope of a little more light tempted him forward to reconnoitre. The lane ended in a terrace with a bartizan wall, which gave an outlook between high houses, as out of an embrasure, into the valley lying dark and formless several hundred feet below. Denis looked down, and could discern a few tree-tops waving and a single speck of brightness where the river ran across a weir. The weather was clearing up, and the sky had lightened, so as to show the outline of the heavier clouds and the dark margin of the hills. By the uncertain glimmer, the house on his left hand should be a place of some pretensions; it was surmounted by several pinnacles and turret-tops; the round stern of a chapel, with a fringe of flying buttresses, projected boldly from the main block; and the door was sheltered under a deep porch carved with figures and overhung by two long gargoyles. The windows of the chapel gleamed through their intricate tracery with a light as of many tapers, and threw out the buttresses and the peaked roof in a more intense blackness against the sky. It was plainly the hotel of some great family of the neighbourhood; and as it reminded Denis of a town house of his own at Bourges, he stood for some time gazing up at it and mentally gauging the skill of the architects and the consideration of the two families.

There seemed to be no issue to the terrace but the lane by which he had reached it! He could only retrace his steps, but he had gained some notion of his whereabouts, and hoped by this means to hit the main thoroughfare and speedily regain the inn. He was reckoning without that chapter of accidents which was to make this night memorable above all

others in his career; for he had not gone back above a hundred yards before he saw a light coming to meet him, and heard loud voices speaking together in the echoing narrows of the lane. It was a party of men-at-arms going the night round with torches. Denis assured himself that they had all been making free with the wine-bowl, and were in no mood to be particular about safe-conducts or the niceties of chivalrous war. It was as like as not that they would kill him like a dog and leave him where he fell. The situation was inspiriting but nervous. Their own torches would conceal him from sight, he reflected; and he hoped that they would drown the noise of his foot-steps with their own empty voices. If he were but fleet and silent, he might evade their notice altogether.

Unfortunately, as he turned to beat a retreat, his foot rolled upon a pebble; he fell against the wall with an ejaculation, and his sword rang loudly on the stones. Two or three voices demanded who went there—some in French, some in English; but Denis made no reply, and ran the faster down the lane. Once upon the terrace, he paused to look back. They still kept calling after him, and just then began to double the pace in pursuit, with a considerable clank of armour, and great tossing of the torchlight to and fro in the narrow jaws of the passage.

Denis cast a look around and darted into the porch. There he might escape observation, or—if that were too much to expect—was in a capital posture whether for parley or defence. So thinking, he drew his sword and tried to set his back against the door. To his surprise, it yielded behind his weight; and though he turned in a moment, continued to swing back on oiled and noiseless hinges,

until it stood wide open on a black interior. When things fall out opportunely for the person concerned, he is not apt to be critical about the how or why, his own immediate personal convenience seeming a sufficient reason for the strangest oddities and revolutions in our sublunary things; and so Denis, without a moment's hesitation, stepped within and partly closed the door behind him to conceal his place of refuge. Nothing was further from his thoughts than to close it altogether; but for some inexplicable reason — perhaps by a spring or a weight — the ponderous mass of oak whipped itself out of his fingers and clanked to, with a formidable rumble and a noise like the falling of an automatic bar.

The round, at that very moment, debouched upon the terrace and proceeded to summon him with shouts and curses. He heard them ferreting in the dark corners; the stock of a lance even rattled along the outer surface of the door behind which he stood; but these gentlemen were in too high a humour to be long delayed, and soon made off down a corkscrew pathway which had escaped Denis's observation, and passed out of sight and hearing along the battlements of the town.

Denis breathed again. He gave them a few minutes' grace for fear of accidents, and then groped about for some means of opening the door and slipping forth again. The inner surface was quite smooth, not a handle, not a moulding, not a projection of any sort. He got his finger-nails round the edges and pulled, but the mass was immovable. He shook it, it was as firm as a rock. Denis de Beaulieu frowned and gave vent to a little noiseless whistle. What ailed the door? he wondered. Why was it open? How

came it to shut so easily and so effectually after him? There was something obscure and underhand about all this, that was little to the young man's fancy. It looked like a snare; and yet who could suppose a snare in such a quiet by-street and in a house of so prosperous and even noble an exterior? And yet — snare or no snare, intentionally or unintentionally — here he was, prettily trapped; and for the life of him he could see no way out of it again. The darkness began to weigh upon him. He gave ear; all was silence without, but within and close by he seemed to catch a faint sighing, a faint sobbing rustle, a little stealthy creak — as though many persons were at his side, holding themselves quite still, and governing even their respiration with the extreme of slyness. The idea went to his vitals with a shock, and he faced about suddenly as if to defend his life. Then, for the first time, he became aware of a light about the level of his eyes and at some distance in the interior of the house — a vertical thread of light, widening towards the bottom, such as might escape between two wings of arras over a doorway. To see anything was a relief to Denis; it was like a piece of solid ground to a man labouring in a morass; his mind seized upon it with avidity; and he stood staring at it and trying to piece together some logical conception of his surroundings. Plainly there was a flight of steps ascending from his own level to that of this illuminated doorway: and indeed he thought he could make out another thread of light, as fine as a needle, and as faint as phosphorescence, which might very well be reflected along the polished wood of a handrail. Since he had begun to suspect that he was not alone, his heart had continued to beat with smother-

ing violence, and an intolerable desire for action of any sort had possessed itself of his spirit. He was in deadly peril, he believed. What could be more natural than to mount the staircase, lift the curtain, and confront his difficulty at once? At least he would be dealing with something tangible; at least he would be no longer in the dark. He stepped slowly forward with outstretched hands, until his foot struck the bottom step; then he rapidly scaled the stairs, stood for a moment to compose his expression, lifted the arras and went in.

He found himself in a large apartment of polished stone. There were three doors; one on each of three sides; all similarly curtained with tapestry. The fourth side was occupied by two large windows and a great stone chimney-piece, carved with the arms of the Malétroits. Denis recognized the bearings, and was gratified to find himself in such good hands. The room was strongly illuminated; but it contained little furniture except a heavy table and a chair or two, the hearth was innocent of fire, and the pavement was but sparsely strewn with rushes clearly many days old.

On a high chair beside the chimney, and directly facing Denis as he entered, sat a little old gentleman in a fur tippet. He sat with his legs crossed and his hands folded, and a cup of spiced wine stood by his elbow on a bracket on the wall. His countenance had a strongly masculine cast; not properly human, but such as we see in the bull, the goat, or the domestic boar; something equivocal and wheedling, something greedy, brutal, and dangerous. The upper lip was inordinately full; as though swollen by a blow or a toothache; and the smile, the peaked eye-brows, and the small,

strong eyes were quaintly and almost comically evil in expression. Beautiful white hair hung straight all round his head like a saint's, and fell in a single curl upon the tippet. His beard and moustache were the pink of venerable sweetness. Age, probably in consequence of inordinate precautions, had left no mark upon his hands; and the Malétroit hand was famous. It would be difficult to imagine anything at once so fleshy and so delicate in design; the taper, sensual fingers were like those of one of Leonardo's women; the fork of the thumb made a dimpled protuberance when closed; the nails were perfectly shaped, and of a dead, surprising whiteness. It rendered his aspect tenfold more redoubtable, that a man with hands like these should keep them devoutly folded like a virgin martyr — that a man with so intent and startling an expression of face should sit patiently on his seat and contemplate people with an unwinking stare, like a god, or a god's statue. His quiescence seemed ironical and treacherous, it fitted so poorly with his looks.

Such was Alain, Sire de Malétroit.

Denis and he looked silently at each other for a second or two.

'Pray step in,' said the Sire de Malétroit. 'I have been expecting you all the evening.'

He had not risen, but he accompanied his words with a smile and a slight but courteous inclination of the head. Partly from the smile, partly from the strange musical murmur with which the Sire prefaced his observation, Denis felt a strong shudder of disgust go through his marrow. And what with disgust and honest confusion of mind, he could scarcely get words together in reply.

'I fear,' he said, 'that this is a double accident. I am not the person you suppose me. It seems you were looking for a visit; but for my part, nothing was further from my thoughts — nothing could be more contrary to my wishes — than this intrusion.'

'Well, well,' replied the old gentleman indulgently, 'here you are, which is the main point. Seat yourself, my friend, and put yourself entirely at your ease. We shall arrange our little affairs presently.'

Denis perceived that the matter was still complicated with some misconception, and he hastened to continue his explanations.

'Your door ··· ' he began.

'About my door?' asked the other, raising his peaked eye-brows. 'A little piece of ingenuity.' And he shrugged his shoulders. 'A hospitable fancy! By your own account, you were not desirous of making my acquaintance. We old people look for such reluctance now and then; when it touches our honour, we cast about until we find some way of overcoming it. You arrive uninvited but, believe me, very welcome.'

'You persist in error, sir,' said Denis. 'There can be no question between you and me. I am a stranger in this country-side. My name is Denis, damoiseau de Beaulieu. If you see me in your house, it is only —

'My young friend,' interrupted the other, 'you will permit me to have my own ideas on that subject. They probably differ from yours at the present moment,' he added with a leer, 'but time will show which of us is in the right.'

Denis was convinced he had to do with a lunatic. He seated himself with a shrug, content to wait the upshot; and a pause ensued, during which

he thought he could distinguish a hurried gabbling as of prayer from behind the arras immediately opposite him. Sometimes there seemed to be but one person engaged, sometimes two; and the vehemence of the voice, low as it was, seemed to indicate either great haste or an agony of spirit. It occurred to him that this piece of tapestry covered the entrance to the chapel he had noticed from without.

The old gentleman meanwhile surveyed Denis from head to foot with a smile, and from time to time emitted little noises like a bird or a mouse, which seemed to indicate a high degree of satisfaction. This state of matters became rapidly insupportable; and Denis, to put an end to it, remarked politely that the wind had gone down.

The old gentleman fell into a fit of silent laughter, so prolonged and violent that he became quite red in the face. Denis got upon his feet at once, and put on his hat with a flourish.

'Sir,' he said, 'if you are in your wits, you have affronted me grossly. If you are out of them, I flatter myself I can find better employment for my brains than to talk with lunatics. My conscience is clear; you have made a fool of me from the first moment; you have refused to hear my explanations; and now there is no power under God will make me stay here any longer; and if I cannot make my way out in a more decent fashion, I will hack your door in pieces with my sword.'

The Sire de Malétroit raised his right hand and wagged it at Denis with the fore and little fingers extended.

'My dear nephew,' he said, 'sit down.'

'Nephew!' retorted Denis, 'you lie in your throat'; and he snapped his fingers in his face.

'Sit down, you rogue!' cried the old gentleman, in a sudden, harsh voice, like the barking of a dog. 'Do you fancy,' he went on, 'that when I had made my little contrivance for the door I had stopped short with that? If you prefer to be bound hand and foot till your bones ache, rise and try to go away. If you choose to remain a free young buck, agreeably conversing with an old gentleman — why, sit where you are in peace, and God be with you.'

'Do you mean I am a prisoner?' demanded Denis.

'I state the facts,' replied the other. 'I would rather leave the conclusion to yourself.'

Denis sat down again. Externally he managed to keep pretty calm, but within, he was now boiling with anger, now chilled with apprehension. He no longer felt convinced that he was dealing with a madman. And if the old gentleman was sane, what, in God's name, had he to look for? What absurd or tragical adventure had befallen him? What countenance was he to assume?

While he was thus unpleasantly reflecting, the arras that overhung the chapel door was raised, and a tall priest in his robes came forth and, giving a long, keen stare at Denis, said something in an undertone to Sire de Malétroit.

'She is in a better frame of spirit?' asked the latter.

'She is more resigned, messire,' replied the priest.

'Now the Lord help her, she is hard to please!' sneered the old gentleman. 'A likely stripling — not ill-born — and of her own choosing, too. Why, what more would the jade have?'

'The situation is not usual for a young damsel,' said the other, 'and somewhat trying to her blushes.'

'She should have thought of that before she began the dance. It was none of my choosing, God knows that: but since she is in it, by our lady, she shall carry it to the end.' And then addressing Denis, 'Monsieur de Beaulieu,' he asked, 'may I present you to my niece? She has been awaiting your arrival, I may say, with even greater impatience than myself.'

Denis had resigned himself with a good grace—all he desired was to know the worst of it as speedily as possible; so he rose at once, and bowed in acquiescence. The Sire de Malétroit followed his example and limped, with the assistance of the chaplain's arm, towards the chapel-door. The priest pulled aside the arras, and all three entered. The building had considerable architectural pretensions. A light groining sprang from six stout columns, and hung down in two rich pendants from the centre of the vault. The place terminated behind the altar in a round end, embossed and honeycombed with a superfluity of ornament in relief, and pierced by many little windows shaped like stars, trefoils, or wheels. These windows were imperfectly glazed, so that the night air circulated freely in the chapel. The tapers, of which there must have been half a hundred burning on the altar, were unmercifully blown about; and the light went through many different phases of brilliancy and semi-eclipse. On the steps in front of the altar knelt a young girl richly attired as a bride. A chill settled over Denis as he observed her costume; he fought with desperate energy against the conclusion that was being thrust upon

his mind; it could not — it should not — be as he feared.

'Blanche,' said the Sire, in his most flute-like tones, 'I have brought a friend to see you, my little girl; turn round and give him your pretty hand. It is good to be devout; but it is necessary to be polite, my niece.'

The girl rose to her feet and turned toward the new comers. She moved all of a piece; and shame and exhaustion were expressed in every line of her fresh young body; and she held her head down and kept her eyes upon the pavement, as she came slowly forward. In the course of her advance, her eyes fell upon Denis de Beaulieu's feet — feet of which he was justly vain, be it remarked, and wore in the most elegant accoutrement even while travelling. She paused — started, as if his yellow boots had conveyed some shocking meaning — and glanced suddenly up into the wearer's countenance. Their eyes met; shame gave place to horror and terror in her looks; the blood left her lips; with a piercing scream she covered her face with her hands and sank upon the chapel floor.

'That is not the man!' she cried. 'My uncle, that is not the man!'

The Sire de Malétroit chirped agreeably. 'Of course not,' he said, 'I expected as much. It was so unfortunate you could not remember his name.'

'Indeed,' she cried, 'indeed, I have never seen this person till this moment — I have never so much as set eyes upon him — I never wish to see him again. Sir,' she said, turning to Denis, 'if you are a gentleman, you will bear me out. Have I ever seen you — have you ever seen me — before this accursed hour?'

'To speak for myself, I have never had that pleasure,' answered the young man. 'This is the first time, messire, that I have met with your engaging niece.'

The old gentleman shrugged his shoulders.

'I am distressed to hear it,' he said. 'But it is never too late to begin. I had little more acquaintance with my own late lady ere I married her; which proves,' he added, with a grimace, 'that these impromptu marriages may often produce an excellent understanding in the long run. As the bridegroom is to have a voice in the matter, I will give him two hours to make up for lost time before we proceed with the ceremony.' And he turned toward the door, followed by the clergyman.

The girl was on her feet in a moment. 'My uncle, you cannot be in earnest,' she said. 'I declare before God I will stab myself rather than be forced on that young man. The heart rises at it; God forbids such marriages; you dishonour your white hair. Oh, my uncle, pity me! There is not a woman in all the world but would prefer death to such a nuptial. Is it possible,' she added, faltering — 'is it possible that you do not believe me — that you still think this' — and she pointed at Denis with a tremor of anger and contempt — 'that you still think *this* to be the man?'

'Frankly,' said the old gentleman, pausing on the threshold, 'I do. But let me explain to you once for all, Blanche de Malétroit, my way of thinking about this affair. When you took it into your head to dishonour my family and the name that I have borne, in peace and war, for more than three-score years, you forfeited not only the right to question my designs, but that of looking me in the face. If your father had been alive, he would have spat

on you and turned you out of doors. His was the hand of iron. You may bless your God you have only to deal with the hand of velvet, mademoiselle. It was my duty to get you married without delay. Out of pure goodwill, I have tried to find your own gallant for you. And I believe I have succeeded. But before God and all the holy angels, Blanche de Malétroit, if I have not, I care not one jack-straw. So let me recommend you to be polite to our young friend; for upon my word, your next groom may be less appetizing.'

And with that he went out, with the chaplain at his heels; and the arras fell behind the pair.

The girl turned upon Denis with flashing eyes.

'And what, sir,' she demanded, 'may be the meaning of all this?'

'God knows,' returned Denis, gloomily. 'I am a prisoner in this house, which seems full of mad people. More I know not; and nothing do I understand.'

'And pray how came you here?' she asked.

He told her as briefly as he could. 'For the rest,' he added, 'perhaps you will follow my example, and tell me the answer to all these riddles, and what, in God's name, is like to be the end of it.'

She stood silent for a little, and he could see her lips tremble and her tearless eyes burn with a feverish lustre. Then she pressed her forehead in both hands.

'Alas, how my head aches!' she said wearily—'to say nothing of my poor heart! But it is due to you to know my story, unmaidenly as it must seem. I am called Blanche de Malétroit; I have been without father or mother for—oh! for as long as I can recollect, and indeed I have been most unhappy all my life. Three months ago a

young captain began to stand near me every day in church. I could see that I pleased him; I am much to blame, but I was so glad that anyone should love me; and when he passed me a letter, I took it home with me and read it with great pleasure. Since that time he has written many. He was so anxious to speak with me, poor fellow! and kept asking me to leave the door open some evening that we might have two words upon the stair. For he knew how much my uncle trusted me.' She gave something like a sob at that, and it was a moment before she could go on. 'My uncle is a hard man, but he is very shrewd,' she said at last. 'He has performed many feats in war, and was a great person at court, and much trusted by Queen Isabeau in old days. How he came to suspect me I cannot tell; but it is hard to keep anything from his knowledge; and this morning, as we came from mass, he took my hand into his, forced it open, and read my little billet, walking by my side all the while. When he finished, he gave it back to me with great politeness. It contained another request to have the door left open; and this has been the ruin of us all. My uncle kept me strictly in my room until evening, and then ordered me to dress myself as you see me—a hard mockery for a young girl, do you not think so? I suppose, when he could not prevail with me to tell him the young captain's name, he must have laid a trap for him: into which, alas! you have fallen in the anger of God. I looked for much confusion; for how could I tell whether he was willing to take me for his wife on these sharp terms? He might have been trifling with me from the first; or I might have made myself too cheap in his eyes. But truly I had not looked for such shameful punishment as

this! I could not think that God would let a girl be so disgraced before a young man. And now I tell you all; I can scarcely hope that you will not despise me.'

Denis made her a respectful inclination.

'Madam,' he said, 'you have honoured me by your confidence. It remains for me to prove that I am not unworthy of the honour. Is Messire de Malétroit at hand?'

'I believe he is writing in the salle without,' she answered.

'May I lead you thither, madam?' asked Denis, offering his hand with his most courtly bearing.

She accepted it; and the pair passed out of the chapel, Blanche in a very drooping and shamefast condition, but Denis strutting and ruffling in the consciousness of a mission, and the boyish certainty of accomplishing it with honour.

The Sire de Malétroit rose to meet them with an ironical obeisance.

'Sir,' said Denis, with the grandest possible air, 'I believe I am to have some say in the matter of this marriage; and let me tell you at once, I will be no party to forcing the inclination of this young lady. Had it been freely offered to me, I should have been proud to accept her hand, for I perceive she is as good as she is beautiful; but as things are, I have now the honour, messire, of refusing.'

Blanche looked at him with gratitude in her eyes; but the old gentleman only smiled and smiled, until his smile grew positively sickening to Denis.

'I am afraid,' he said, 'Monsieur de Beaulieu, that you do not perfectly understand the choice I have offered you. Follow me, I beseech you,

to this window.' And he led the way to one of the large windows which stood open on the night. 'You observe,' he went on, 'there is an iron ring in the upper masonry, and reeved through that, a very efficacious rope. Now mark my words: if you should find your disinclination to my niece's person insurmountable, I shall have you hanged out of this window before sunrise. I shall only proceed to such an extremity with the greatest regret, you may believe me. For it is not at all your death that I desire, but my niece's establishment in life. At the same time, it must come to that if you prove obstinate. Your family, Monsieur de Beaulieu, is very well in its way; but if you sprang from Charlemagne, you should not refuse the hand of a Malétroit with impunity — not if she had been as common as the Paris road — not if she were as hideous as the gargoyle over my door. Neither my niece nor you, nor my own private feelings, move me at all in this matter. The honour of my house has been compromised; I believe you to be the guilty person, at least you are now in the secret; and you can hardly wonder if I request you to wipe out the stain. If you will not, your blood be on your own head; it will be no great satisfaction to me to have your interesting relics kicking their heels in the breeze below my windows, but half a loaf is better than no bread, and if I cannot cure the dishonour, I shall at least stop the scandal.'

There was a pause.

'I believe there are other ways of settling such imbroglios among gentlemen,' said Denis. 'You wear a sword, and I hear you have used it with distinction.'

The Sire de Malétroit made a signal to the chaplain, who crossed the room with long silent strides and raised the arras over the third of the three doors. It was only a moment before he let it fall again; but Denis had time to see a dusky passage full of armed men.

'When I was a little younger, I should have been delighted to honour you, Monsieur de Beaulieu,' said Sire Alain; 'but I am now too old. Faithful retainers are the sinews of age, and I must employ the strength I have. This is one of the hardest things to swallow as a man grows up in years; but with a little patience, even this becomes habitual. You and the lady seem to prefer the salle for what remains of your two hours; and as I have no desire to cross your preference, I shall resign it to your use with all the pleasure in the world. No haste!' he added, holding up his hand, as he saw a dangerous look come into Denis de Beaulieu's face. 'If your mind revolt against hanging, it will be time enough two hours hence to throw yourself out of the window or upon the pikes of my retainers. Two hours of life are always two hours. A great many things may turn up in even as little a while as that. And, besides, if I understand her appearance, my niece has something to say to you. You will not disfigure your last hours by a want of politeness to a lady?'

Denis looked at Blanche, and she made him an imploring gesture.

It is likely that the old gentleman was hugely pleased at this symptom of an understanding; for he smiled on both, and added sweetly: 'If you will give me your word of honour, Monsieur de Beaulieu, to await my return at the end of the two hours before attempting anything desperate, I shall

withdraw my retainers, and let you speak in greater privacy with mademoiselle.'

Denis again glanced at the girl, who seemed to beseech him to agree.

'I give you my word of honour,' he said.

Messire de Malétroit bowed, and proceeded to limp about the apartment, clearing his throat the while with that odd musical chirp which had already grown so irritating in the ears of Denis de Beaulieu. He first possessed himself of some papers which lay upon the table; then he went to the mouth of the passage and appeared to give an order to the men behind the arras; and lastly he hobbled out through the door by which Denis had come in, turning upon the threshold to address a last smiling bow to the young couple, and followed by the chaplain with a hand-lamp.

No sooner were they alone than Blanche advanced towards Denis with her hands extended. Her face was flushed and excited, and her eyes shone with tears.

'You shall not die!' she cried, 'you shall marry me after all.'

'You seem to think, madam,' replied Denis, 'that I stand much in fear of death.'

'Oh, no, no,' she said, 'I see you are no poltroon. It is for my own sake—I could not bear to have you slain for such a scruple.'

'I am afraid,' returned Denis, 'that you underrate the difficulty, madam. What you may be too generous to refuse, I may be too proud to accept. In a moment of noble feeling towards me, you forget what you perhaps owe to others.'

He had the decency to keep his eyes on the floor as he said this, and after he had finished, so as not to spy upon her confusion. She stood

silent for a moment, then walked suddenly away, and falling on her uncle's chair, fairly burst out sobbing. Denis was in the acme of embarrassment. He looked round, as if to seek for inspiration, and seeing a stool, plumped down upon it for something to do. There he sat playing with the guard of his rapier, and wishing himself dead a thousand times over, and buried in the nastiest kitchen-heap in France. His eyes wandered round the apartment, but found nothing to arrest them. There were such wide spaces between the furniture, the light fell so badly and cheerlessly over all, the dark outside air looked in so coldly through the windows that he thought he had never seen a church so vast, nor a tomb so melancholy. The regular sobs of Blanche de Maletroit measured out the time like the ticking of a clock. He read the device upon the shield over and over again, until his eyes became obscured; he stared into shadowy corners until he imagined they were swarming with horrible animals; and every now and again he awoke with a start, to remember that his last two hours were running, and death was on the march.

Oftener and oftener, as the time went on, did his glance settle on the girl herself. Her face was bowed forward and covered with her hands, and she was shaken at intervals by the convulsive hiccup of grief. Even thus she was not an unpleasant object to dwell upon, so plump and yet so fine, with a warm brown skin, and the most beautiful hair, Denis thought, in the whole world of womankind. Her hands were like her uncle's; but they were more in place at the end of her young arms, and looked infinitely soft and caressing. He remembered how her blue eyes had shone

upon him, full of anger, pity, and innocence. And the more he dwelt on her perfections, the uglier death looked, and the more deeply was he smitten with penitence at her continued tears. Now he felt that no man could have the courage to leave a world which contained so beautiful a creature ; and now he would have given forty minutes of his last hour to have unsaid his cruel speech.

Suddenly a hoarse and ragged peal of cock-crow rose to their ears from the dark valley below the windows. And this shattering noise in the silence of all around was like a light in a dark place, and shook them both out of their reflections.

'Alas, can I do nothing to help you ?' she said, looking up.

'Madam,' replied Denis, with a fine irrelevancy, 'if I have said anything to wound you, believe me it was for your own sake and not for mine.'

She thanked him with a tearful look.

'I feel your position cruelly,' he went on. 'The world has been bitter hard on you. Your uncle is a disgrace to mankind. Believe me, madam, there is no young gentleman in all France but would be glad of my opportunity, to die in doing you a momentary service.'

'I know already that you can be very brave and generous,' she answered. 'What I *want* to know is whether I can serve you — now or afterwards,' she added, with a quaver.

'Most certainly,' he answered with a smile. 'Let me sit beside you as if I were a friend, instead of a foolish intruder ; try to forget how awkwardly we are placed to one another ; make my last moments go pleasantly ; and you will do me the chief service possible.'

'You are very gallant,' she added, with a yet deeper sadness......'very gallant...... and it somehow pains me. But draw nearer, if you please; and if you find anything to say to me, you will at least make certain of a very friendly listener. Ah! Monsieur de Beaulieu,' she broke forth — 'ah! Monsieur de Beaulieu, how can I look you in the face?' And she fell to weeping again with a renewed effusion.

'Madam,' said Denis, taking her hand in both of his, 'reflect on the little time I have before me, and the great bitterness into which I am cast by the sight of your distress. Spare me, in my last moments, the spectacle of what I cannot cure even with the sacrifice of my life.'

'I am very selfish,' answered Blanche. 'I will be braver, Monsieur de Beaulieu, for your sake. But think if I can do you no kindness in the future — if you have no friends to whom I could carry your adieux. Charge me as heavily as you can; every burden will lighten, by so little, the invaluable gratitude I owe you. Put it in my power to do something more for you than weep.'

'My mother is married again, and has a young family to care for. My brother Guichard will inherit my fiefs; and if I am not in error, that will content him amply for my death. Life is a little vapour that passeth away, as we are told by those in holy orders. When a man is in a fair way and sees all life open in front of him, he seems to himself to make a very important figure in the world. His horse whinnies to him; the trumpets blow and the girls look out of windows as he rides into town before his company; he receives many assurances of trust and regard — sometimes by express in a letter — sometimes face to face, with persons of

great consequence falling on his neck. It is not wonderful if his head is turned for a time. But once he is dead, were he as brave as Hercules or as wise as Solomon, he is soon forgotten. It is not ten years since my father fell, with many other knights around him, in a very fierce encounter, and I do not think that any one of them, nor so much as the name of the fight, is now remembered. No, no, madam, the nearer you come to it, you see that death is a dark and dusty corner, where a man gets into his tomb and has the door shut after him till the Judgment Day. I have few friends just now, and once I am dead I shall have none.'

'Ah, Monsieur de Beaulieu!' she exclaimed, 'you forget Blanche de Malétroit.'

'You have a sweet nature, madam, and you are pleased to estimate a little service far beyond its worth.'

'It is not that,' she answered. 'You mistake me if you think I am easily touched by my own concerns. I say so, because you are the noblest man I have ever met; because I recognize in you a spirit that would have made even a common person famous in the land.'

'And yet here I die in a mousetrap — with no more noise about it than my own squeaking,' answered he.

A look of pain crossed her face, and she was silent for a little while. Then a light came into her eyes, and with a smile she spoke again.

'I cannot have my champion think meanly of himself. Anyone who gives his life for another will be met in Paradise by all the heralds and angels of the Lord God. And you have no such cause to hang your head. For········pray, do

you think me beautiful?' she asked, with a deep flush.

'Indeed, madam, I do,' he said.

'I am glad of that,' she answered heartily. 'Do you think there are many men in France who have been asked in marriage by a beautiful maiden — with her own lips — and who have refused her to her face? I know you men would half despise such a triumph; but believe me, we women know more of what is precious in love. There is nothing that should set a person higher in his own esteem; and we women would prize nothing more dearly.'

'You are very good,' he said; 'but you cannot make me forget that I was asked in pity and not for love.'

'I am not so sure of that,' she replied, holding down her head. 'Hear me to an end, Monsieur de Beaulieu. I know how you must despise me; I feel you are right to do so; I am too poor a creature to occupy one thought of your mind, although, alas! you must die for me this morning. But when I asked you to marry me, indeed and indeed, it was because I respected and admired you and loved you with my whole soul, from the very moment that you took my part against my uncle. If you had seen yourself, and how noble you looked, you would pity rather than despise me. And now,' she went on, hurriedly checking him with her hand, 'although I have laid aside all reserve and told you so much, remember that I know your sentiments towards me already. I would not, believe me, being nobly born, weary you with importunities into consent. I too have a pride of my own: and I declare before the holy mother of God, if you should now go back from your word already given, I would

no more marry you than I would marry my uncle's groom.'

Denis smiled a little bitterly.

'It is a small love,' he said, 'that shies at a little pride.'

She made no answer, although she probably had her own thoughts.

'Come hither to the window,' he said with a sigh. 'Here is the dawn.'

And indeed the dawn was already beginning. The hollow of the sky was full of essential daylight, colourless and clean; and the valley underneath was flooded with a gray reflection. A few thin vapours clung in the coves of the forest or lay along the winding course of the river. The scene disengaged a surprising effect of stillness, which was hardly interrupted when the cocks began once more to crow among the steadings. Perhaps the same fellow who had made so horrid a clangour in the darkness not half an hour before, now sent up the merriest cheer to greet the coming day. A little wind went bustling and eddying among the tree-tops underneath the windows. And still the daylight kept flooding insensibly out of the east, which was soon to grow incandescent and cast up that red-hot cannon-ball, the rising sun.

Denis looked out over all this with a bit of a shiver. He had taken her hand, and retained it in his almost unconsciously.

'Has the day begun already?' she said; and then, illogically enough: 'the night has been so long! Alas! what shall we say to my uncle when he returns?'

'What you will,' said Denis, and he pressed her fingers in his.

She was silent.

'Blanche,' he said, with a swift, uncertain, passionate utterance, 'you have seen whether I fear death. You must know well enough that I would as gladly leap out of that window into the empty air as to lay a finger on you without your free and full consent. But if you care for me at all, do not let me lose my life in misapprehension; for I love you better than the whole world; and though I will die for you blithely, it would be like all the joys of Paradise to live on and spend my life in your service.'

As he stopped speaking, a bell began to ring loudly in the interior of the house; and a clatter of armour in the corridor showed that the retainers were returning to their post, and the two hours were at an end.

'After all that you have heard?' she whispered leaning towards him with her lips and eyes.

'I have heard nothing,' he replied.

'The captain's name was Florimond de Champdivers,' she said in his ear.

'I did not hear it,' he answered, taking her supple body in his arms, and covering her wet face with kisses.

A melodious chirping was audible behind, followed by a beautiful chuckle, and the voice of Messire de Malétroit wished his new nephew a good-morning.

QUESTIONS FOR GENERAL STUDY

1. What is the theme of the story? Point out, if possible, the struggle that is the core of the action.

2. Is the chief interest in setting, plot or character?

3. Is the title adequate?

4. How does the story open? How are we informed of what happened before the opening?

5. Is all the setting given in a lump, or scattered through the story? Has the setting any influence on the destiny of the characters?

6. What is the pre-eminent character, and what are his characteristics? Name and characterize the minor characters.

7. Are the persons characterized by (a) direct description, or (b) indirect description, such as conversation, acts and gestures, dress and appearance?

8. What is the dominant incident which causes a 'complication' leading to the climax?

9. Give the dramatic climax, and the climax of the action. Are there any minor crises?

10. Is there an element of surprise in the climax?

11. What use is made of suspense?

12. Is this story realistic or romantic?

13. Is dialogue well interspersed with action and explanation, or crowded all in a lump? Does the dialogue advance the action? What proportion of the story does the dialogue occupy?

14. Into how many scenes would you divide the story if you were dramatizing it?

15. Is the author's purpose apparent?

16. Does the story seem to you to leave a single impression? If so, by what means is this achieved?

THE GREAT CARBUNCLE

This is one of those mysterious tales in which Hawthorne delighted to discover how people would act in a given

set of circumstances. In *Dr. Heidegger's Experiment*, we can imagine that he built the story around the question, 'What would happen if certain individuals could be suddenly restored to youth?' He felt that character could be tested and revealed in a crisis of that sort. As an answer to what question can you imagine *The Great Carbuncle* to have been written?

1. In how many ways does the author individualize the characters of this story?
2. How does each one's character affect his destiny?
3. Hawthorne was fond of teaching a lesson by means of a tale. What seems to you to be the 'moral' of this story?

THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO

Note.—'A huge human foot d'or . . . . imbedded in the heel.' The coat of arms of Montresor. A huge human foot of gold on a sky-blue background, the foot crushing a rearing serpent.

'Nemo-me &c.'—No one attacks me with impunity.

'A trowel'—Fortunato was a member of the order of Masons. Montresor, not understanding his action in throwing the bottle upwards, declares that he is also a mason, but he means a mason who uses brick and mortar.

'*In pace requiescat*'—Let him rest in peace.

1. What is the setting of the story?
2 What note is struck in the first paragraph to explain the action of Montresor?
3. What is the only kind of revenge that he feels is adequate for 'the thousand injuries of Fortunato'?
4. What contrast is there between the atmosphere in the beginning and the end of the story?
5. What is suggestive in the dress of each of the persons? How does it hint at something in his character or purpose?
6. By what devices does Montresor draw Fortunato into the snare?
7. How had Montresor arranged for the absence of the servants? Does this show a preconceived plan?

8. How does the author contrive to give us all the details regarding the position and conditions of each of the characters?

9. How does he contrive to give the idea of the length of the vaults, the foul air in them, and their position?

TENNESSEE'S PARTNER

Note.—'This yer is a lone hand, played alone, and without my pardner.' Referring to the game of cards.

'Euchred.' Also a term used in cards, meaning 'beaten.'

'A buckeye tree.' American horse-chestnut.

'Catafalque.' A stage or platform for bearing a corpse or an effigy.

'Redwoods.' Huge fir-trees of California.

'Moccasined feet.' The American-Indians wore sandals of soft deerskin. The heaps of pine needles piled around the roots of the trees are likened to these moccasins.

1. What character dominates the first half of the story, and what the second half? Which is the stronger in interest?

2. In how many episodes does the partner's wife appear, and what hint of the third episode is given?

3. Why did the partner shake hands with Tennessee when he returned without his wife?

4. Tell the following in regard to Tennessee's chracter: (a) By what touches does the author make us see him in the unfavourable light in which the community regarded him, and what is that light? (b) By what means are we made to realize that there must be another side to his character?

5. In the account of Tennessee's Partner, where do you find instances of (a) unconscious humour, (b) dignity and lack of bluster, (c) affectionate loyalty?

6. At what point does the action of the central incident begin?

7. At what point is the dramatic climax with respect to both Tennessee and Tennessee's Partner?

8. Why was the Partner's 'life in jeopardy'?

9. Why did the Judge suddenly decide to give Tennessee the maximum penalty?

10. How much or little of the hanging episode is given? Why?

11. Would it have been better to let the story end with funeral, or with the conclusion here given? Why?

THE NECKLACE

1. What information do we get in the first paragraph and in the second?

2. What ideas are contrasted in the third?

3. Count the number of words used to introduce the story; the number of words used to tell the previous history of the chief character.

4. Why is the ball not described at length?

5. How many incidents or minor crises lead up to the climax?

6. Who suggested the borrowing of the jewels and on whom, therefore, is partly the blame for their loss? Who suggested substituting a new necklace?

7. What opportunity is given in the story for the loss of the jewels?

8. Does the author describe the actions or the thoughts of the characters? Is this method subjective or objective?

9. What turn might the story have taken at any point after the necklace was lost to make an entirely different ending?

10. Can you imagine how this story might have been spiritualized by a writer of a different temperament?

A GALA DRESS

Note.—The Fourth of July marks the annual celebration of the Declaration of Independence by the United States. Most Americans attend picnics and fire off firecrackers on that day.

1. How are we given information about the names of the characters, their stations and the time of the year? Is this given briefly or at length? Directly or indirectly?

2. In how many words are all the characters of the story introduced ?

3. How does the author differentiate the characters ?

4. How much of the plot is given in the first scene ?

5. What does the author tell us between the first and second scenes ? Does she show sympathy with the chracters she describes ? Compare this with Maupassant's treatment of his characters.

6. What feeling is aroused in us by Matilda when she is introduced ? Why ?

7. How does Matilda discover the dress, and what suspicion does it arouse in her mind ?

8. What can you say of Elizabeth's ability in giving answers to Matilda's prying questions ? Who wins in this contest ? Do we feel that this is the end of the matter ?

9. Remembering upon what the author wishes to focus attention, why does she give so little space to the description of the picnic ? Compare this with the description of the ball in 'The Necklace'.

10. Did Matilda have any part in the accident to Emily's dress ?

11. Where does Matilda show the first sign of an accusing conscience ?

12. What incident as Emily and Matilda reach the house points the way to a turn in the sisters' fortune ?

13. What elements enter into the happy ending of this tale ?

A BLACKJACK BARGAINER

Note.—In the southern part of the United States, feuds sometimes develop as the result of a quarrel between two individuals. Their respective families continue the feud for years or perhaps generations, regarding it as their duty and a matter of honour to kill any member of the opposite family when occasion offers. It is such a feud as this that forms the 'complication,' or basis of struggle in this story.

'Blackjack' is a term of contempt for a dissolute character. Its use in the title emphasizes the unexpected nobility of the last act of the 'bargainer.'

'Moonshined.'—Manufactured whisky illegally.

'Poker.' A gambling game.

1. What touches in the description of Garvey indicate that he was not quite sane, and so make plausible his strange request?

2. How did his ambitions differ from his wife's? What made his wife wish to own a feud?

3. Why does the author show Goree hesitating to sell the feud and passionately refusing to sell the monuments in the family burying ground?

4. How does the author show that the temptation to go back to the poker game was vividly present to Goree all through the early part of the story?

5. Assuming that the Colonel dropped the feud because he saw that Goree was so poverty-stricken, and pitied him, how do you account for Goree's forgetting the existence of the feud?

6. When did Goree first realize that the Colonel's life was in danger? How did he find a way to save him? Does the author explain this plan fully, or leave it to the reader's imagination?

7. Why does he introduce the family burying-ground as the scene for Goree's sacrifice of his life?

8. Does this sacrifice seem consistent with Goree's character?

THE COMFORTER

Note.—'Comforter' is used in America as a synonym for 'bed quilt'.

1. Who tells this story?

2. What impression is given of the hospital — efficiency or sympathy? How does this prepare the way for introducing the Comforter?

3. What traits characterize him?

4. What qualities had probably been called out by his service to suffering patients?

5. Taking the sentence, 'We can't save him' as the dramatic climax, what is the climax of the action?

6. What does the manner of telling the story suggest in regard to the author's personality ?

THE WELL

PART I

1. In how many words are the main characters and the initial struggle or incident introduced ?

2. By what means is the character of each person revealed to us at the beginning ?

3. What important act is indicated by the line of dots ? Why did the author omit telling this episode ?

4. What was Benson thinking of when he said, 'No more than he deserved' ?

PART II

1. By what touches is created an atmosphere of foreboding about the well ?

2. 'Make the acquaintance of Truth' refers to the proverb, 'Truth lies at the bottom of a well.' What particular truth was there in this case ?

3. How are we informed of the disappearance of Carr?

4. Under what circumstances had the words been spoken earlier in the story, 'Jem, help me out' ? Does their repetition here hint at the supernatural ?

5. Why did Jem regard Olive with horror when he learnt of her dropping the bracelet down the well ?

6. In what did his fishing-line catch the first time, and what does this tell us ? In what did it probably catch the second and third time ?

PART III

1. Is our sympathy to some extent with Benson ? Why?

2. How is the ending of this tale a case of 'poetic justice'?

'MOLLY McGUIRE, FOURTEEN'

Note.—'Molly McGuire' was the name of a secret society in the Virginia Military Institute which always

numbered thirteen. The signature of 'Molly Fourteen' indicates a mysterious addition.

1. How does the author create an atmosphere of suspense and expectancy in the beginning of the story?

2. How does he manage to put us in sympathy with the traditions and ideals of the institution? Is a 'human appeal' like this necessary to the success of a story?

3. What 'conspiracy' had been planned in regard to Duval by the faculty of the Institute? What touches show us that this year's celebration was of more than ordinary interest and importance?

4. How are we informed of the history of the practical joke and of the blowing up of the arsenal?

5. At what point do you begin to suspect who 'Molly Fourteen' was?

6. What is the purpose of the scene between the general and Duval in the general's office?

7. What does the last line of the tale tell us?

8. Distinguish the three lines of interest in this story.

THE SIRE DE MALETROIT'S DOOR

Note.—'Burgundy and England.' The soldiers of these two countries were fighting each other in France in the early part of the fifteenth century.

1. What do we learn about the setting in the opening paragraphs?

2. What was unusal in the fact that the chapel was lighted so late at night? For what episode later in the story does this prepare us?

3. By what hints do we learn the position and social standing of Denis?

4. In how many places does the author use significant phrases or 'finger-posts' to hint at some coming event?

5. How does the incident of Denis's foot rolling on a pebble form a crisis in the story?

6. Why did the door yield when Denis leaned against it?

7. In what parts of the house are the successive scenes of the story laid?

8. Why is Denis not the chief character?

9. Why did the Sire say, 'I have been expecting you'? Why did he call Denis 'nephew'?

10. Why did Blanche say, 'That is not the man'? Why did the Sire answer, 'I suspected as much'?

11. How was Denis made acquainted with the details of Blanche's previous history?

12. What did he mean by saying, 'I believe there are other ways of settling such imbroglios among gentlemen'?

13. Why had the Sire placed armed men in the passage?

14. What was the cause of Blanche's weeping the first time? Was it the same cause that made her weep the second time? By what misunderstandings is the suspense prolonged during her conversation with Denis?

15. What did she give as her reason for loving Denis? Is it logical?

16. What sort of an ending is hinted at in the Sire's words, 'his new nephew'?

17. From whose standpoint is the story told? Try to tell it from Blanche's standpoint.

The Phoenix Press, Visvesvarapuram, Bangalore City